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THE HEATHEN WORLD AND ST. PAUL.

ST. PAUL AT ROME.

BY THE
VERY REV. CHARLES MERIVALE,
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ST. PAUL AT ROME.

CHAPTER I.

CONDITION OF THE JEWS AT ROME AT THE PERIOD OF OUR LORD'S MINISTRY.

WE have been accustomed to remark in modern times upon the vigour and activity of the Anglo-Saxon race, as evinced in its wide diffusion, and the deep root it has taken in so many regions of the habitable globe. The English people, we say, has developed a special facility in accommodating itself to all climates, and in taking the lead both in mental and physical capacity among all the nations with which it has come in contact. What may have been thus recently remarked of our own race was no less worthy of note with regard to three of the most famous peoples of antiquity. The Greeks, the Romans, and the Jews spread themselves, in the centuries next before and after the Christian era, with the same irrepressible activity over all the countries to which they could penetrate, and displayed, each in its turn, no less superiority of character and power of self-assertion. The Greeks had planted their colonies on many coasts from very early times ; their commercial activity had especially developed itself during

the flourishing period of their freedom ; but the far-extending conquests of Alexander had tended to give them still further expansion. Hundreds of cities in Asia and Africa, no less than in Europe, had been founded by them ; their language had become the ordinary medium of communication between many distant nations of widely different origin ; their literature was accepted as the common heritage of all the cultivated portion of the human race. Again, the Grecian conquests had been succeeded by the Roman. The language and laws of the imperial city had been diffused throughout the world by more than one Roman Alexander, they had been diffused over a wider space, and impressed upon it even more firmly and permanently. First the Greeks, and after them the Romans had been to the ancient world, as colonists and civilizers, much what the English race has proved itself to the modern.

But in the ancient times there was also a third race which exercised a more subtle, but hardly a less potent, influence upon mankind around it than either the Greeks or the Romans. The Jews exhibited quite as much of what we may call the instinct of peopling and settling as either of these dominant nations ; and though their capacity for conquering and civilizing was less marked, they left, from the peculiar moral force of their character, a deeper, if not a wider, impression than either. The spiritual influence of the Jews, as the race through which the Christian religion has been transmitted to all succeeding generations must ever give them the first place among all the nations, in the estimation of those whose faith is fixed

on the promises of the Gospel. The Jews have not, indeed, been generally disposed to cultivate the intimacy of the strangers among whom they have domiciled themselves ; nevertheless the power they showed of old, and still continue to show, of planting themselves in the midst of all other nations, and securing a peculiar position among them, through their own marvellous power of adaptation to all climates and to all conditions of life, constitutes a social phenomenon worthy to be classed with the kindred development of the Greeks, the Romans, and the English.

The diffusive energy of this wonderful people was never more strongly marked than in the critical period of the fall of the Roman Free-state and the foundation of the Empire. Philo the Jew, writing in the time of the emperor Caligula about A.D. 40, bears testimony to the wide diffusion of his countrymen long before the great dispersion more familiarly known to us which followed upon the fall of Jerusalem. This patriotic writer speaks boastfully of the ancient capital of Judæa as then standing in all its pride and splendour as the acknowledged head of an illustrious and long-settled nation. "Jerusalem," he says, "is the city of my ancestors, the metropolis, not of Judæa only, but of many other lands, in consequence of the colonies she has at various times sent out into the neighbouring countries, such as Egypt, Phœnicia, Syria, and Coele-Syria ; and into more distant regions also, Pamphylia, Cilicia, the greatest part of Asia Minor as far as Bithynia, and the remotest shores of the Euxine ; nor less into Europe, into Thessaly, Bœotia, Macedonia, Ætolia, Attica, Argos, Corinth,

and into most, and those the best, parts of the Peloponnesus. And not only are the continents full of Jewish colonies, but so likewise are the principal islands, Eubœa, Cyprus, and Crete. I say nothing of the countries beyond the Euphrates ; but all these too, a small portion excepted, abound with Jewish inhabitants, and particularly Babylon and the satrapies of the rich districts adjacent thereto.”¹

It is singular, perhaps, that the writer should, in this ample enumeration, make no mention of the Jews sojourning in many parts of western Europe, of which there are undoubtedly, though perhaps less striking, traces to be discovered ; but the place of Rome itself on the list is supplied by the well-known text in the second chapter of the Acts of the Apostles, which signalizes among the multitudes of many countries and languages who heard the Apostles speak under the influence of the miraculous gift of tongues, “strangers of Rome, Jews, and proselytes.” It is generally admitted that the men of diverse race and speech who were assembled at Jerusalem on the great day of Pentecost,—“Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judæa and Cappadocia, in Pontus and Asia, in Phrygia and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, Cretes, and Arabians,”—were men of Jewish origin, or proselytes at least from other nations converted to the Jewish faith, and initiated into Jewish

¹ Philo, *Leg. ad Caium*, 36. Comp. Josephus, *Bell. Jud.*, ii. 16, § 4; vii. 3. Milman, *History of the Jews*, ii. 448.

usages. The two passages above cited, which might be further corroborated by others, show in a striking manner how widely the Jewish creed was disseminated throughout the Gentile world at the period of the first preaching of the Gospel.

But further: there exists abundant evidence to show that Rome, as the capital of the empire, and of the civilized world at that era, constituted the great point of attraction to the nations around her; and of these more particularly to the Jews. The Roman dominion has been described as a narrow fringe of soil round the central or Mediterranean sea. Down to the era of Augustus the colonization of the Romans had penetrated far inland in a few quarters only. Spain had been long conquered; but the interior of this broad peninsula had been abandoned almost wholly to its native barbarians. Gaul had recently succumbed; but in Gaul also the effects of Roman culture had extended but little beyond the limits of its Mediterranean districts. The interior of Macedonia and Mæsia was still left in its primitive rudeness; the interior of Asia Minor was to a great extent desolate and trackless. The subjects of Rome, east and west, north and south, congregated together on the verge of the midland sea, which ran from one end of the empire to the other, and constituted the common thoroughfare of all; while Rome herself, seated almost on the coast of Italy, and accessible by a broad and navigable stream, was actually the maritime capital of a great maritime association. As such, indeed, she is vividly described in the book of Revelation: "The great whore [or trafficker] that sitteth

upon many waters." . . . "Alas ! alas ! that great city Babylon." . . . "The merchants of the earth shall weep and mourn over her, for no man buyeth of her merchandise any more." . . . "That great city wherein were made rich all that had ships in the sea."¹ By the native Jew this magnificent centre of law, government, and culture was still chiefly regarded as an emporium of universal commerce. Rome was the western Babylon, the home of merchant princes, the caravanserai of the nations.

Many as were the different peoples that settled around the world's central basin, they could for the most part hold communication with one another by means either of the Greek or of the Latin language. We may imagine, indeed, that the Greek, the Roman, the Syrian, the Moor, the Gaul, and the Thracian may have formed a common *lingua franca* among themselves for their daily intercourse ; but, if so, it was never inscribed in letters, and all traces of it have utterly vanished. Under the pressure, however, of the Roman domination there existed no great variety of political life among these peoples ; the many-sided Paganism which prevailed throughout them all was tolerant at least, if not sympathetic ; all denizens, as they were, of one zone, and confined within at most twelve degrees of latitude, there was but little marked distinction among them either of form or colour ; there was little to keep them apart from one another except distance and the ordinary difficulties of travel. These obstructions were smoothed away

¹ Rev. xvii. xviii.

for them in a remarkable degree. The roads, indeed, with which the government had bound the provinces together, though admirably adapted to the military purposes for which they were principally intended, seem to have been comparatively little used for mere social communication. There was, however, an easier and perhaps a more rapid means of communication at hand. The sea became the great highway of commerce. The sea, though closed to timid navigators for four months of the year, was open for the remaining and far larger portion ; and for eight months the sea from Gades to Alexandria was alive with vessels engaged in the transport of merchandise, the product of the various soils and climates which skirted its borders. During all that period the water was generally calm, and the movement of craft propelled by oars, whenever the breeze was deficient or adverse, approached more nearly to the speed and security of our own days than we might at first sight imagine. Though costly, it was both swift and certain. The provisioning of Rome herself, and of the many populous cities on the coast, was confided to the punctuality of the corn vessels from Africa and the islands ; and though this machinery was sometimes sorely tried, it was never found wholly to fail.

This facility of communication attracted a vast concourse of foreigners to Rome from all parts of her dominion, some for the purposes of traffic, many with a view to permanent residence. The great officers of the Republic brought back with them year by year the friends and clients whom they had attached to themselves in the provinces. These

people, no doubt, held out to their kinsmen at home the advantages they had themselves attained at the centre of all business, luxury, and pleasure, where the natives, with all their special capacity for government and administration, were singularly dependent upon strangers for the arts and appliances of the culture they admired. In the well-known passage of Horace we are told how conquered Greece had subdued her rude conqueror, and introduced the arts into still rustic Latium. Roman literature abounds in illustrations of this familiar saying. Nor are we less familiar with similar statements of the irruption of the Syrians into Latium, or the “influx of the Orontes into the Tiber.” Gauls and Germans also penetrated into Rome in considerable numbers. At a moment when the city was affected by a panic upon the defeat of Varus by the Cheruscans, an order was issued to expel all the residents of German origin; as if the stragglers from this single nationality were numerous enough to cause serious disquiet even amidst the vast population of the world’s metropolis. Of the multitude of Jews who had at this period taken up their abode in Rome we possess some more distinct statements. Thus, for instance, whereas every Jew was required by the law of his own nation to contribute a didrachm (2d.) annually to the service of the Temple, whether he resided at home or abroad, the Romans could make it matter of serious complaint that so large an amount of specie should be constantly withdrawn from the circulation of the capital, and transmitted to a foreign country, thus weakening, as they imagined, their own re-

sources, and augmenting those of their subjects who might at any moment become their enemies.¹ When the Jews sent a deputation of their people to Rome to plead with Augustus for the restoration of their independence, after the death of Herod, their envoys were met, as Josephus assures us, by a body of no less than 8,000 of their countrymen from the city, and accompanied by this imposing escort to the temple at which the Emperor consented to confer with them.² The numbers, indeed, which the Jewish historian presents to us throughout his works are too commonly and too wildly exaggerated to allow us to depend upon his exactness in this instance : nevertheless, the assertion is supported in the main by other corroborative testimony. We are informed, for instance, on the weightier authority of Tacitus, that the Jewish Libertini, or freed slaves, who inhabited Rome in the time of Tiberius, and were expelled and transported to Sardinia, to check the dangerous turbulence of their countrymen in the city, alone amounted to 4,000. Great, however, must have been the numbers still left within the walls ; for Caligula judged it expedient for the peace of the community to restrain these too by special enactment, and Claudius issued decrees for their entire expulsion. This violent measure, indeed, was not, we are assured, actually enforced, because the numbers of their people were so great that the attempt to put it in execution would have caused a serious disturbance. So it was that

¹ Cicero, *pro Flacco*, 28.

² Josephus, *Antiq.*, xvii. 11, § 12.

about this period Seneca could speak of the Jews at Rome almost in the same language which Horace had applied to the Greeks. Their peculiar usages had become so familiarly known, and were latterly found so acceptable in the city, that the conquered might be said to have imposed their laws upon the conquerors.¹

Various causes concurred to produce this great infusion of the Jewish element into the population of the imperial metropolis. Some traces there may be, however indistinct and doubtful, of an earlier connection of the Jews with Rome ; but their historic introduction into the city may be referred to the return of Pompeius from the East, with the numerous train of captives of many nations, and especially of Jews, which he brought from that quarter in the year 61 before our era. This great conqueror had inflicted a cruel blow upon the Jewish people in their own homes. By the use both of craft and violence, he had effected his entrance into their city and their temple, and thrust himself even within the Holy of Holies. He had provoked them to a desperate resistance, and this resistance he had put down with ruthless barbarity. Pompeius had set up the family of a foreigner, the Idumæan Antipater, in the place of the national stock of the Maccabees, and had plainly prepared the way for the entire overthrow of the national independence, which followed in the reign of Augustus. He had slaughtered thousands of the people, and of the rem-

¹ Tac., *Ann.*, ii. 85 ; Suet., *Clard.*, 25 ; Dion Cass., Ix. 6 ; Seneca, quoted by St. Augustine, *de civ. Dei*, vi. 11.

nant he had carried off vast numbers, and sold them as slaves at Rome. Nevertheless, dreadful as was the condition of the slave at Rome, his lot was practically alleviated by a great facility of recovering his freedom. The ability and artifices of the Jews often won them the favour of their masters. The rude and rigid stock of Italy was singularly dependent upon the subtle genius of Greeks and Asiatics for every appliance of art, science, and amusement. The Jews became the pet familiars of the men, and still more of the women of Rome. Thus, for instance, the Valerii, to which gens the empress Messalina belonged, seem to have attached to themselves many Jewish slaves and freed-men. Among the inscriptions in a columbarium or burial-place on the Appian Way, we find such Hebrew names as Baricha, Zabda, Achiba, Giddo, and Sab-batis, all combined with the gentile name Valerius. The Jews profited, no doubt, largely by the habit of the Roman master manumitting his household slaves on his death-bed. They were themselves devotedly attached to one another ; and we may be further sure that any Jew who attained a position of wealth on his own account would make it one of his first duties to purchase the freedom of many of his countrymen.

It should be noted, moreover, that at the period of our Lord's ministry the Jews were held in exceptional favour by the Roman Government in their own country of Palestine, and were recommended thereby to the sympathy of the ruling race at home. The government which had displaced the Asmonean dynasty, and elevated the stranger Antipater to the throne of Judæa, had apparently found it conducive

to its interest, after the consummation of this revolution, to attach the nation to the new *régime* by conferring upon it many special privileges. Pompeius had made himself pre-eminently hateful to the Jews by his violence and his insolence. It has been conjectured that his rival, Cæsar, was induced on that very account to cultivate their friendship the more assiduously. The historian Josephus has enumerated the various decrees which the victor in the civil wars promulgated in the interest of the members of this nation resident in the cities of Asia Minor ; such, for instance, as the grant of exemption from the military conscription, in consideration of their abhorrence of the meats and usages of the pagans ; together with permission to pay their accustomed tribute to their own national Temple, instead of to the Roman treasury. From this or from other causes, the Jews at Rome displayed the most poignant concern at the death of the Dictator. While the foreigners in the city very generally marked their grateful sense of Cæsar's services to the provincials, the Jews, it is said, exceeded them all in zeal and vehemence. They attended in great numbers at the solemn ceremony of his obsequies in the Forum, and continued for days and nights to crowd about the spot and utter loud lamentations. This demonstration marks very strongly the impression which the great founder of the Empire had made upon the conquered and oppressed dependents of so many generations of Roman oligarchs.

The Idumæan dynasty at Jerusalem had studied, and had perhaps been prompted, to effect the disin-

tegration of the Jewish national sentiment by sapping the religious prejudices of their people. Herod had made it a leading principle of his policy to introduce among the pure monotheists of Judæa the notions of hero-worship prevalent among the heathen, especially in the East. While Cæsar and Augustus affected to repudiate the cult which their countrymen, even at Rome and in Italy, were only too prone to accord to them, both Romans and foreigners abroad insisted upon elevating them into present divinities in more distant countries. The premature decease of the first of the Cæsars interrupted the progress of this homage to a living man ; but it was promptly followed by the deification of the deceased emperor, and thus the example of an imperial apotheosis was deliberately set, to be repeated again and again through several centuries. In many of the provinces, and notably in Gaul and Judæa, the two which had been latest conquered, the loyalty of which was least assured, the living emperor Augustus was flattered with divine honours. Herod led the way in Judæa by erecting temples to the divinity both of Julius and Augustus in various localities, though he abstained from thrusting this offensive worship into Jerusalem itself. In the jealous capital of the Jewish nation, degraded though it was, the Romans still maintained, and doubtless required their dependents to maintain, some show of respect for the national Temple.

At these invidious assaults upon their most cherished principles, covert though they were, the Jews constantly expressed the deepest alarm and resentment. Divided indeed they were among them-

selves into sects and factions ; nevertheless, it was in vain that Herod, and the party called after him Herodians, because of the homage and, eventually, the divine honours with which they magnified him, tried to wean them from their national prejudices by introducing among them the seductive brilliancy of Hellenic civilization, with its religious shows and embellishments. The spirit of the Jewish people revolted all the more strongly against these fascinations ; the party of the Pharisees cultivated the strictest bond of union among themselves, as the upholders of all the ideas and institutions of their ancestors, both civil and religious. Nor did the Jews in their remoter domiciles abroad abstain from retaliation. They carried the war of conversion and proselytism into the camp of the enemy. Shaking off the pride of isolation in which, as the chosen of Jehovah, they had for ages enshrouded themselves, they deliberately undertook in many quarters the work of making their own religious principles widely comprehended, and of recommending them assiduously to those around them. It was, perhaps, the translation of their holy books into the Greek language, the common speech of all the civilized East, and of no small portion of the West also, that first brought the creed of Judaism prominently before the world, while it inflamed among the Jews themselves an overweening pride and confidence in their spiritual resources. They began to feel that a sacred trust was committed to their keeping, and that it had become their duty to make their own special advantages known and valued in all quarters. Under the rule of the Maccabees or Asmonæans, in

the most flourishing period of their religion, they had converted to Judaism the neighbouring people of Galilee and Idumæa, while they had made a deep impression upon the spiritual life both of Babylon and of Alexandria. The Pharisees, we are told, compassed sea and land to make proselytes. We may believe that their efforts were not single and desultory, but that they established in every region a regular propaganda of their faith. The agents of Jewish commerce were not less active in disseminating their national ideas, and succeeded in making the law of Moses known from the Persian Gulf to the Straits of Gibraltar. Thus we read of Izates, a king of Adiabene, in Assyria, becoming converted, together with his family and many of his chiefs. At Damascus the women were noted for their devotion to the institutes of the Hebrew lawgiver. Wherever there was a commercial entrepôt, there was planted a centre of Jewish proselytism. The literature of Rome at this period abounds with notices of the propensity of her citizens, and still more of their women, to adopt the usages, together with some at least of the dogmas, of the Jewish people. Many practised the Jewish fasts, more, no doubt, observed their festivals and Sabbaths. Some, it is said, such as Izates himself, submitted to the rite of circumcision, even against the remonstrance of their families. From this period the division of time by weeks, after the Jewish fashion, became commonly recognised throughout all parts of the world wherever the Jews had penetrated. It may be observed that, though the creed and customs of the Jews excited some contempt and some hostility

among the pagans, even at this period, this singular people had by no means come as yet to be regarded with the general odium which it incurred a few years later. The disturbances they created at Rome by their unbridled quarrelsomeness, and especially by the violence with which they assailed the sect of Christians which sprang up among them, began, soon after our Lord's death to make them objects of distrust to the authorities; but it was not till after the desperate contest between Rome and Palestine, which ended in the destruction of Jerusalem itself, that the Jew came to be regarded with inveterate distrust and hatred. From the tone of Cicero and Horace respecting them to that of Juvenal and Tacitus, there is a change which marks the growth of a century of hostility.

The diffusion of the Jewish Scriptures through the translation of the Septuagint is eminently signalized by the indisputable reference of Virgil's well-known eclogue to the prophecy of Isaiah. The imagery of that striking poem may be paralleled generally from other heathen sources, but the reference made therein to a wonderful Child, a prince of peace, a restorer of pristine felicity, can be derived only from the Messianic vaticinations of the Hebrew prophet. It seems indeed impossible to trace any other consistent meaning in this most curious and interesting effusion of the Roman poet. We cannot lay our hands precisely upon any national personage to whom its glowing anticipations can be said to point; nor can we connect its sublime, but vague, aspirations with any definite object of mere human realization. The

so-called Sybilline oracles which had obtained currency at the period were themselves imbued with a tinge of Oriental and even of Jewish feeling. They might serve to introduce the Roman poet to the more distinct visions of the Hebrew prophet, and give a point to his utterances which they would not otherwise have attained. It is not in its imagery but in its personal scope that the "Pollio" seemed so plainly to reflect the teaching of Isaiah. It would seem as if a deeply religious mind had come in collision in the dark with a genuine spiritual inspiration ; and the result has served to show to all time the effect which the Jewish Scriptures were beginning to exercise and were destined to exercise more and more upon the soul of the natural man. The mere fact, however, that these Scriptures were becoming more and more familiar to the minds of the pagans, appears also in some parts of the Metamorphoses of Ovid ; such, for instance, as his account of the creation, and of the original blessedness and subsequent wickedness of man, of the universal deluge, and again, of the pride and fall of Phaethon, akin to Lucifer Son of the Morning. Doubtless all these stories were known well enough before ; but, in Ovid's hands, they seem to assume a greater prominence than ever, and a deeper significance, as well as a closer relation to their Scriptural counterparts.

We are naturally interested in inquiring into what classes of Roman society this Jewish element chiefly penetrated. The Jews seem to have had at all times a natural propensity to herd together. Whether rich or poor they have been found, even in modern times,

warmly to acknowledge their common tie both of blood and of spiritual affinity. In London at the present day, where the Jewish race permeates both the higher and the lower grades of society, the poorer Jews are mostly to be found, indeed, in certain well-known localities, and the wealthy apart from them in others ; but in each case they are equally gregarious. In modern Rome they have been actually confined by police regulations to a specific district ; but in the Rome of Augustus their local habitat was no less distinctly marked. The Jews dwelt there for the most part together in a suburban region beyond the Tiber, a squalid and despicable quarter of the city ; and it has been inferred from this circumstance, and from the petty traffic in refuse and second-hand articles which was appropriated to them, that they belonged exclusively to the lowest classes of the population. We shall see in another place to what extent this idea requires to be qualified.

CHAPTER II.

THE FIRST RECEPTION OF THE GOSPEL AT ROME.

THE extent to which the Jews abroad kept up a communication with their brethren at home is strongly marked by several notices of antiquity. The temple-tribute of the didrachmon, already mentioned, was discharged in specie, and it must have required many hands to convey so valuable a treasure from all the numerous residences to which they had betaken themselves. The readiness, indeed, with which people moved about in those days may be illustrated, perhaps, by the decree that every one should go to his own city to be taxed, whether near at hand or at a distance. So Joseph and Mary went up from Nazareth to Bethlehem. But the chief communication between the Jews abroad and their metropolis was on the recurrence of the three principal feasts, at each of which they attended in great numbers, though of all these the Passover had the highest claim upon them. We have already observed that the figures which Josephus specifies throughout his history so abundantly, and with such apparent confidence, must generally be regarded as wildly exaggerated; nevertheless, in the particular case of the attendance at the Passover, his details are too precise to be set aside altogether. This authority, with the best information

open to him, computes the number of lambs slain in sacrifice at exactly 256,500. He proceeds to say that ten was the regular quota that partook of each victim, though there were often more, sometimes as many as twenty. Accordingly, the estimate he makes when he calculates the whole number of partakers at 2,700,000, would seem to be strictly moderate. All these he designates as "men," though a subsequent statement may be taken to correct this, and we may fairly include in it women, and probably children also. To this total, however, not a few must be added for those who were suffering from any legal impurity, and were accordingly excluded from the feast. Of this enormous number the proportion of Jews resident in the city can have been but small; perhaps we may place it at 200,000; and this will leave as many as some two and a half millions for the crowds that flocked every year to the city at the season of the Passover. The pilgrimage to Jerusalem may be compared, in this respect, with the pilgrimages of more modern days to Mecca.¹

It is probable that the influx of strangers at the Passover was much greater than at Pentecost, a festival which ranked, no doubt, far below it in interest and importance. Yet the season of early summer was more favourable for transit by sea than that of early or mid-spring, if less so for journeying by land in so hot a climate. At all events, we may well believe that on the feast of Pentecost which followed next after our Lord's crucifixion, very great was the concourse of Jews and proselytes from among the many nations

¹ Josephus, *Bell. Jud.*, vi. 9, § 3.

which are enumerated in the well-known passage of the Acts of the Apostles. The signal miracle which is there recorded could not fail to be published by all who witnessed it, on their return home, to the still larger number of fellow-believers whom they had left behind. The residents at Rome brought back with them, together with the account of the miracle itself, some notices of the preaching of St. Peter, and of the faith in the resurrection of Jesus, whom he had declared to be the Messiah. Peter had taken the lead as chief spokesman on that solemn occasion. He had addressed himself to the "men of Israel" and the "dwellers in Jerusalem," and together with them to all who were then present, being spiritually of the seed of Abraham. "This Jesus," he had said, "hath God raised up"; and he called upon the disciples around him as witnesses to the fact of the resurrection; and he had added, "Therefore let all Israel"—that is, every heir of the promise to the chosen seed of Abraham, of whatever nation he be born, and wheresoever he reside—"know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ." The narrative continues:—"Now when they heard this,"—that is, the crowd of visitors,—"they were pricked in their heart, and said unto Peter and to the rest of the Apostles," Peter being evidently the most prominent among them, "Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said unto them, Repent and be baptized every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise," that is, the promise

of the new covenant, “is unto you and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call. And with many other words did he testify and exhort, saying, Save yourselves from this untoward generation.”¹

The foreign Jews, from a distance, who heard this appeal, must have considered it as a call to themselves to accept the promise of salvation thus miraculously attested, and to convey it to their homes, whither they were about to return. Accordingly we may assume it as highly probable that the Church of Rome actually dates from the return of the Jews who had visited Jerusalem at the Pentecost next after the crucifixion, which we may place in the year 33 of the vulgar era. Hitherto the distinction between the Jew and the Christian believer had lain in the heart and conscience only. Outward distinction, as yet, there was none. If such were the case at Jerusalem itself, still more would it be so for a time at a distance such as Rome. They who had been witnesses of the descent of the Holy Ghost and of the miraculous gift of tongues would, doubtless, inquire of the disciples, before they left the Jewish capital, respecting the character of the works and preaching of Jesus whom these affirmed to be risen from the dead. They would examine, under the guidance of the most eloquent of the Apostles, the Scriptures which predicted the coming of the Messiah and announced beforehand what manner of man He should be, and the kind of works by which He should be made known. They

¹ *Acts* ii. 40.

would ponder these matters in their hearts, and, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, many would, doubtless, be led to an understanding of them, and to the conviction that the long-expected Saviour had really appeared under the form of Jesus of Nazareth. But no provision had as yet been made for the regular preaching of Christ beyond the injunction to the Apostles to declare the Gospel unto every creature, after they should first have made it known at Jerusalem and in Judea. All that the new disciples who returned as converts to Rome had yet learnt was the duty of communicating to the brethren whom they revisited the wonderful things which they had themselves seen and heard, and the grace which, as their excited imaginations might so well hope and believe, had so lately fallen upon Israel.

It was to the followers of the Law, to the Jews of the synagogue at Rome, the same Jews who had been labouring, not without marked success, to make the law of Moses known to the Gentiles at the great metropolis, that this new development of Jewish doctrine was to be announced. The success which had hitherto attended Jewish teaching might encourage the new converts to expect a frank reception of this message also. A glorious vista of spiritual triumphs might suddenly offer itself to their anticipation. The religion of the Jews was regularly organized at Rome. As a nation their cult was recognised by the Roman law, and placed on the footing of the various foreign superstitions which were sanctioned by Roman policy. The Roman magistrate had hitherto evinced no jealousy of Jewish rites, while the fashion of the

day had pronounced unequivocally in their favour. But the Jews at Rome, as well as elsewhere, were exceedingly jealous of any innovations upon their established institutions; any reform from within they denounced no less pertinaciously than an external attack. We may naturally suppose, indeed, that they would be even more prone to resist such innovations in the land of the stranger, where their position had to be maintained by unanimous and steadfast co-operation among themselves, than in their own country, where their influence was already acknowledged and paramount. Under such circumstances the position of the little band of primitive believers in the pagan capital was, no doubt, especially critical. They had more determined hostility to expect, while they had less support to depend upon. They were cut off from the more favoured band of disciples at home, who could appeal to their own actual witness, or to that of their neighbours and associates. They had no support in the natural eloquence or supernatural powers of the Apostles themselves, who still persisted in fixing their abode at the centre of their faith; they were destitute as yet of the organization which was only just beginning to spring up among the believers in Judæa, to encourage and confirm the scattered members of the faith which might gather round it.

We may readily believe that the first nucleus of the Christian order and discipline which was about to develop itself would be the declaration of Peter, "that God hath made this same Jesus, whom ye"—(the Jews at Jerusalem)—"have crucified, both Lord and Christ"; that same declaration or confession upon

which Christ had said that He would build his Church as upon a rock. This, they would say one to another, is the faith we have learnt from Peter, who seemed to be the mightiest among the little band of disciples whom we met on the day of Pentecost ; in whose company we witnessed so notable a miracle, whose preaching was confirmed to us by the extraordinary gift of tongues. The name of Peter would still stand first and foremost in their minds, and occupy the chief place in their accounts of what they had discovered. To him they would refer as the author of their faith. As their internal organization began to assume a form, they would recognise in him the founder of their Church. Such, we may presume, would be the natural progress of ideas among them. Even if Peter never came to Rome at all, if he never came to found a Church by his own preaching on the spot, if he never assumed any authority or oversight of the Church which then came into being, nevertheless, it was natural that to him such a foundation should be attributed, that an ecclesiastical legend should grow up around it, and that it should become, in the course of ages, an established article of popular belief that Peter was the founder of the Roman Church, and the first bishop of Rome.

Such, indeed, we know to have been the case ; but the historical testimony on which this development is founded is absolutely worthless. Whether at a later period St. Peter actually visited Rome ; whether it was from Rome that he wrote the epistle which he professes to date from “ Babylon ” ; whether he was joined in his last year with St. Paul in the preaching of the

Gospel in the great metropolis of the heathen world ; and whether it was there that he underwent the martyrdom which was plainly predicted for him ; these are questions to which we shall have occasion to refer further on, but they are altogether independent of the question now before us, whether St. Peter was the founder of the Church at Rome from the beginning. It is upon this assertion that the modern and mediæval Church of Rome would establish its claim to a primacy among all Christian Churches, and a dominion over them. But to such a claim our actual records give no countenance of any value whatever. There is no hint in the book of the Acts of the Apostles of a visit of St. Peter to Rome. There is no inference of the kind to be adduced from the epistles either of St. Peter or of St. Paul. Nor, again, is there any trace of such a tradition in our ecclesiastical records prior to Jerome, who, in the fourth or fifth century of our era, makes the bald, unsupported statement, that St. Peter went to Rome in the second year of Claudius, that is, A.D. 42 ; that he founded the Church there, and constituted himself its first bishop, that he continued to remain there as many as twenty-five years, and eventually suffered there in the last year of Nero, A.D. 68.¹ For these statements no authority whatever is advanced, and when we find them mixed up with the unsupported assertion that the Apostle had been previously bishop of Antioch, and with the foolish fable of his contest with Simon the magician, we may confidently

¹ Jerome, *Script. Eccl.* i.

reject them, together with all the superstructure of hierarchical pretensions that is built upon them, as unworthy of the serious attention of plain seekers after truth. We may admit the existence of an early and a widespread tradition that St. Peter founded the Church at Rome either himself or in conjunction with St. Paul ; but it seems capable of proof that he was not there before St. Paul, even if, which is still open to question, he followed and joined him there at a later period. On the contrary, in the Epistle to the Galatians, it is said distinctly that to St. Peter was assigned the Gospel of the circumcision, or the preaching of the faith to the Jews, while St. Paul was recognised as the Apostle of the uncircumcision, or of the Gentile world.

We assume, then, that the message of the Gospel was first announced at Rome by the Jews or proselytes who had been converted to Christ by the preaching of St. Peter on the day of Pentecost, A.D. 33. The society of Christians in the great city consisted at the beginning of the few isolated believers who had witnessed the miracle, and had learnt to apprehend its significance. These men doubtless talked over what they had seen and heard one with another on the spot at the time, and subsequently in their own homes on their return. They discussed its bearings among themselves ; they contracted a natural sympathy, and communicated their own hope and faith to those nearest to them. As heirs of one hope and of the same calling they rejoiced over every new adherent whom they attracted to their side and induced to listen to their spiritual exhortations. One or another of them would come to be soon acknowledged as a leader, for

his spiritual gifts, for his gift of praying, of preaching or expounding, for the sanctity of his life, or generally for the superior force of his character. These disciples would occupy themselves chiefly in searching the Scriptures for their witness to Christ's appearance, and for the assurance they might give of a new covenant with the God of Israel, of the revelation of new heavens and a new earth. But they would not all at once develope any form of spiritual government among themselves. They would be satisfied at first with administering the simple rite of Baptism as an assurance of the remission of sins upon a declaration of repentance; they would live constantly together in the practice of mutual kindness, breaking bread from house to house, and consecrating their meal with prayer, in remembrance of their blessed Lord and Saviour. Such would be "the apostles' doctrine," and "the apostles' fellowship," in which they had been instructed at Jerusalem; such the common forms of obedience by which they would become mutually known to one another. But they had received no instructions there as to the position which the law must now assume, the conditions of the covenant of grace, the services or ministry of the Gospel. Such matters as these, fundamental as they were, must be left for their own discovery, or for the arrival of more advanced teachers to disclose to them. The first epoch in the progress of the Christian society, or Church at Rome, would date, we may suppose, from the early dispersion of the believers in Judæa which followed upon the death of the first martyr, Stephen, and this may be dated A.D. 36. Up to that period, the Apostles and first

disciples had doubtless confined their direct teaching to the Jews with whom they conversed at Jerusalem itself. The persecution which ensued drove the believers further afield. They were "all scattered abroad throughout the regions of Judæa and Samaria." Such, at least, was the case with the believers generally; the Apostles alone remained still for a time at the centre where they had first planted themselves. The disciples, however, "went everywhere preaching the word." Philip the deacon betook himself to Samaria, as we are told particularly, as if to verify the declaration of Jesus, "Ye shall be witnesses of me both in Jerusalem, and in all parts of Judæa, and in Samaria"; to which He had added, as the next and final step, "and unto the uttermost parts of the earth." To what more distant parts the disciples now repaired, what journeys they made, or what direction they took, we have no specific statement, except that Philip was enjoined to turn his steps southward on the road to Gaza, and, returning from thence, after his meeting with the chamberlain of Candace the Ethiopian, "he was found" at Azotus, and, "passing through, preached in all the cities" of the coast, "till he came to Cæsarea."¹

It was, no doubt, under stress of this persecution that many of the Gentile nations were now visited by the disciples, and received direct information of the revelation of Christ the Saviour. None of these were more likely to be thus favoured than the Romans themselves. Distant though their city was, none, we may well suppose, was in closer or more constant communication with the capital of the Jews.

¹ *Acts viii. 40.*

It was to the infant society of Christian believers at Rome that the itinerant disciples would most immediately address themselves. The Church at Rome would derive more solidity and a more organized character with every fresh arrival from the source of Christian development. The usages established by the Apostles themselves at Jerusalem would be promptly accepted at Rome; the sacraments would assuredly be first recognised as the necessary marks of internal union, and their obligation would be primarily insisted upon. Matters of ceremony, of order and discipline, might be left to follow, as the need for them became more urgently felt, as the duty of adapting the nascent church to the constitution of its kindred churches made itself more apparent. But such formal organization would be a birth of time, and the fruit of growing observation and experience. As regards the spirit in which the preachers of the Gospel among the Gentiles would commence their operations at this moment, we must remember that the process against Stephen, and the general persecution which followed it, were the ~~great~~ work of the Pharisees, a local sect, confined for the most part to Judæa, and exercising little if any influence over the great body of the Jews dispersed among the nations. We may imagine that little or no stigma was thus cast upon the Gospel in the eyes of the Jews abroad, and that Christ could at this moment be much more freely preached among them at Rome than in Jerusalem. Nevertheless the new belief was thus placed before them in direct antagonism to the ceremonial law, and to the traditional observances of their religious leaders at home. The preaching of Christian truth was thus

thrown more decisively upon the witness of the heart, upon the spirit of the Jewish religion rather than the letter. "God," said the first teachers of the Gospel at Rome, "is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth." The original society of disciples at Rome would be little likely to receive from the mouth of those who first came to them from Jerusalem, under stress of the Pharisaic persecution, any distinct or cogent call to submit themselves to an ecclesiastical organization. This might follow in due time, but at the first their law would be in the broadest sense a law of liberty. There were other things of more immediate importance to come first.

1. First of all, following the indications given us in the preaching of Philip the deacon, the only one of the dispersed disciples of whose conduct we have any record, would come the preaching of Jesus as the Messiah predicted by the prophets. The time is now come—so the Christian preacher would proclaim—the time has come for the manifestation of the Son of David, the King of Israel, the Son of God, He who cometh in the name of the Lord. Thereupon would arise in every hearer's mind the vital question, What is to be expected of this Messiah? What is to be the nature of His mission? More than one claimant to the title soon appeared. Such had been the prediction of our Lord Himself, and such, according to the accounts we have received, was the actual fact. The excitement and discontent of the Jewish people at this period gave colour to the pretensions of various personages, who are supposed to have announced themselves as the expected deliverers.

from the Roman yoke. More than one of these seem to be specified under the names of Theudas, Judas, and Simon ; and such, we may suppose, was the one who is said in the Acts of the Apostles to have “boasted himself to be somebody” of more than usual significance.¹ We may allow, however, that Bar Cochebas, the leader of the Jewish insurgents under Hadrian a hundred years later, is the only one of these national heroes who is historically designated as a pretended Messiah.

2. The preacher of the true Christ would doubtless describe Him, after the example of John the Baptist, as a spiritual reformer, and would demand in His name repentance and amendment of life. He would enlarge, as we have said, on the duty of receiving Him as a Divine Master, and of placing His moral precepts above the requirements of the ceremonial law. This would undoubtedly excite surprise and murmuring among the Jewish residents at Rome ; it would open among them the same question which had led to the persecution of the believers at Jerusalem ; and we should expect to find that the little band of disciples there would soon be exposed, as elsewhere, to much violence and misrepresentation.

3. Further, the preacher of the true Christ at Rome, feeling his mission to be to the Gentiles as well as to his Jewish brethren, would necessarily proclaim the call of the Gentiles, and the abolition of the special privileges of the Jews under the Mosaic law. We can hardly doubt that even before the vision of

¹ *Acts v. 36.*

St. Peter and the conversion of Cornelius the question would present itself to such preachers in the capital of the Gentile world, "What hinders that these should be baptized?" At all events, this question would certainly follow immediately afterwards. This would become another source of jealousy and dissatisfaction between the different classes of Jews, proselytes, and yet unconverted hearers. Even at Jerusalem, the authority of the Apostles had hardly availed to maintain harmony among their disciples on the subject of the true relation of the new faith to the old. At a distance from Judæa, and especially at the centre of so many discordant opinions, each seeking to assert itself against every other, divisions of sentiment would assuredly arise, and would plunge the Jewish community into confusion. The notion that the recent development of Judaism must issue in the reception of all mankind into its bosom, unpalatable as it was at Jerusalem, would be perhaps still more so at Rome; for the Jews at Rome were especially proud of their nationality, and elated with the impression it had so evidently made upon the strangers around them. To associate the pagans with themselves in the same spiritual hopes and privileges would be to abandon their actual vantage ground, and descend to a lower level. It would require not only the authority of a chief among the Apostles, but the power of an inspired counsellor, to overcome the obstacles which existed at Rome to the preaching of Christ as a common Saviour both of the Jew and of the Gentile.

Accordingly we find some slight but significant

notices in our historians of the troubles which occurred at this very period among the Jewish residents in the city. Suetonius mentions the fact that the emperor Claudius decreed their entire expulsion from Rome, on account of the repeated disturbances that arose among them at the instigation of a certain Chrestus. The early Christian writers seem to have agreed in applying this statement to the contests between the Jews of the old faith and the sectarians who followed the Gospel of Jesus ; and it has been judged probable by many modern critics both that the name of Chrestus was a mistake for Christus, and that the Roman writer was further unable to distinguish between the conflicting persuasions which then divided the Jewish community at the capital. As regards, indeed, the fact of the expulsion, it is confirmed by the express testimony of the Acts ;¹ but we must distinguish this occurrence from that which is recorded by Dion Cassius, a historian of a later date (about A.D. 200), and of less authority, who speaks of an edict of Claudius, not for banishing, but simply for controlling, the Jews, and forbidding them to assemble together, according to their national custom. Their numbers had again increased, he tells us, since the first great clearance which was made of them by Tiberius. But if this statement be deserving of credit, it must be referred to the first year of Claudius (A.D. 41), while the severer measure seems to have occurred in the ninth or even in the twelfth year of that emperor. We may readily believe that these dissensions were

¹ *Acts xviii. 2.*

mainly caused by the religious jealousies of the Jews ; and the pertinacity with which these strangers continued to disturb the peace of the city is marked by the repetition of the edicts thus levelled against them. It may be believed, indeed, that the decree for their wholesale expulsion was but partially enforced, just as with decrees of a similar kind so often issued against the votaries of divers foreign superstitions, against the soothsayers, and against the philosophers. Nevertheless this hostile action seems to mark a change in the feelings of the citizens towards the Jewish people, which had hitherto been rather in their favour, but were now beginning to weary of their violent and intriguing spirit, and inclined to fear as well as to dislike of them ; while both the Jews and the Christians in their midst still continued to make proselytes, principally, but not wholly, from the lower class of foreigners.

The community or church of Christian believers which was now collected together at Rome was composed both of Jews and Gentiles. These Gentiles might be further subdivided into such as had been previously enrolled as proselytes to Judaism, and had since become converted to Christ, and such as had received the Gospel while in the ranks of heathenism. Probably the members of neither of these classes were in the habit of speaking the vernacular language of Judæa among themselves. They would rather employ a tongue which was common to all, and there was certainly none so common as the Greek. This was the language generally spoken, and almost universally understood, even in Palestine itself ; but more espe-

cially it was the literary language of the whole civilized world. Latin was little used in the eastern provinces. Even at Rome strangers from the East would seldom or never resort to it. The Romans, on their part, were far less impulsive and curious than the Greeks and Asiatics, and the Christian preaching would be much more attractive, as a new and exciting subject, to the Greeks and semi-Hellenized Orientals, than to the Italians or Latins. We may conclude that the primitive Church at Rome was composed mainly of Jews and Greeks, with an infusion of other Orientals, but probably few, if any, genuine Romans. We should expect that any communication publicly addressed to this Church would be couched in the Greek language.

As regards the Apostle Paul himself, who was now about to write his "Epistle to the Romans," we may be assured that he was personally familiar with the common speech of the Jews in their own country; and it was in Hebrew, or more properly in the popular Aramaic idiom, that he addressed them at Jerusalem when he sought to justify himself to the multitude, and explain his position as a believer in Christ, whom he had before persecuted.¹ But to the chief captain, speaking more privately, he had addressed himself most naturally in Greek, as the general medium of communication between men of some social position at a time when all nationalities were locally mingled together. Whether he ever spoke Latin, or even understood it, does not anywhere distinctly appear, though

¹ *Acts xxii. 23.*

we may infer his knowledge of the tongue from the liberal education he had received, and from his apparent acquaintance with the principles of Roman law.¹ The use, indeed, of Latin seems to be left altogether out of consideration among the speakers and writers in Judæa at this time, of whatever origin they might be. Many Greeks, and certainly many Jews, assumed Roman names, such, for instance, as Lucas, Silas, Marcus, and the Apostle Paulus himself. Mark, in his Gospel, is careful to explain the meaning of various Latin words, but he wrote in Greek. So also St. Paul seems to have written uniformly in Greek, and the tradition that Mark, as a Latin speaker, acted as his interpreter at Rome, shows at least that it was easy to believe him ignorant of the Latin language altogether. Whether he exhorted the churches of Asia Minor, of Greece, or of Rome itself, whether he addressed a Timotheus or a Titus, he uniformly clothed his thoughts in the Greek, and in no other language. And so it was with the other Apostles and disciples, even for some time after the apostolic age. Greek was the common vehicle of thought to which the preachers of a new and common religion would most naturally resort. Their general use of the Greek language was in itself a token that they regarded all mankind as members of one family, and held out to them one appointed means of salvation for all equally. Rome itself was the common centre of this all-embracing confraternity of nations ; Rome, therefore, was to be addressed, not in Latin, but in Greek.

¹ See Note at the end of the volume.

CHAPTER III.

ST. PAUL'S ARRIVAL AT ROME.

FROM a few slight indications in St. Paul's Epistle to the Romans, to which we now turn our attention, we may infer that the Apostle wrote it towards the close of his residence at Corinth, and that it was sent in the spring of the year A.D. 58, about the time of his departure for Jerusalem. At the close of the Epistle he solicits the prayers of the disciples whom he addresses, that he may be delivered from "them that believe not in Judæa," and that his service for Jerusalem "may be accepted of the saints" there. If these prayers succeed, he hopes to come to the disciples at Rome "with joy." When he has performed the immediate business in hand, he anticipates with devout satisfaction the great work of carrying the Gospel by his own ministry to the capital of the world, and even to the western extremity of the empire in Spain. Meanwhile he has other business nearer at hand, which he must first perform. He is intent on taking his journey to Jerusalem, notwithstanding the peril which he knows will environ it. He had already come to open disagreement with his countrymen in all the great cities of Greece and Asia. He had been assailed and persecuted by them, and

his life had been threatened on many occasions. It was through the machinations of the discontented Jews that he had been so often attacked by the rulers or by the mob in these Gentile cities, and had suffered the scourgings and the stonings of which he makes complaint to the Corinthians.¹ He had been "in perils by his own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils among false brethren." The Gospel of Jesus Christ was an object of general suspicion and contention because it was misunderstood. At Jerusalem, to which place he was first bound, he would no doubt confer with the Apostles and the actual witnesses of Christ; but he had himself a mission from the Lord also: he was himself sent forth to declare the word which had been specially revealed to him, and in the epistle he now writes to the Romans he explains the scope and meaning of the Gospel which has been committed to his ministry. He lays the foundation of the doctrine which he will preach to them in all its fulness, if he is suffered to accomplish his purpose of visiting Rome in person.

The commencement of the Epistle, declaring the universal sinfulness of all mankind, is meant to prepare for the doctrine he has to preach, namely, the common necessity of salvation through Christ, the Redeemer of the world. The vivid description it gives of sin is most fitly addressed to a city in which the wickedness of the human race actually culminated, and was manifestly produced or fostered by the prevailing

¹ 2 Cor. xi. 25.

idolatry of the heathen world. This was to attack sin in its principal stronghold. This attack upon the Gentiles first and foremost seems to indicate that the Gentile converts who had been called out of this stronghold of sin were uppermost in the Apostle's thoughts. Amidst this general wickedness, however, and this disobedience to the plain law of God, the Jews, he continues, are even more inexcusable than the Gentiles ; and upon them, accordingly, the wrath of God is first manifested. Nevertheless his natural yearning towards his own countrymen induces the Apostle to balance this declaration with a word of comfort. He allows that, after all, the glory and honour and peace which ensue from God to every one that worketh good are also given first to the Jew, and then to the Gentile after him. Yet essentially the two are alike in the sight of the Divine Father : "There is no respect of persons with God."¹

This was a bold and startling declaration to make at Rome, to a community whether of Romans or of Jews ; for these two nations were each, above all others at that moment, convinced that such a respect did actually exist in their special favour. The Roman deemed his own the favoured race, and regarded the extent of his dominion as a conclusive proof of it. The Jew, with no less complacency, maintained that the Divine preference of himself was intimated by the spiritual advantages he manifestly enjoyed, and the glorious hopes proclaimed to him. To require the Jew and the Roman each to surrender the assurance

¹ *Romans* ii. 11.

on which he relied, and admit the other to an equal footing in Divine favour, was indeed a bold undertaking. But between the Jew and the Roman there stood also the Greek, and the Epistle of St. Paul was addressed to the Greek equally with both the others ; perhaps, indeed, to the Greek more directly than to either of them, inasmuch as the Grecian element in the early Roman Church was, as we have seen, larger probably than either of the others. The Greek, too, had a pride of his own, a pride in his intellectual culture ; and he looked down from his own point of view with equal scorn on both the Roman and the Jew. He, too, would despise, if he dared not resent, the apostolic declaration of a universal equality of races.

The Apostle proceeds to assert the insufficiency of "the Law," whether it be the Moral Law, which is binding upon Jew and Gentile equally, or the Ceremonial Law, which pertains to the Jew only. Neither the one nor the other could avail to render men holy before God. If God was pleased with Abraham, it was not for his fulfilling the Law imposed upon him, but for the faith which was "counted to him for righteousness." This great truth, that faith may be counted for righteousness before God, refers not to the Jews or to the circumcision only, for it was declared of Abraham while he was yet in uncircumcision. Accordingly the promise now published, or rather republished, under the Gospel, affects the Gentile no less than the Jew. To make this dogma of justification by faith more comprehensive, the Apostle goes back from Abraham, the father of the Jews, to Adam,

the father of all, and declares that as by the offence of one, judgment came upon all men to condemnation, even so by the righteousness of One, namely, Christ, “the free gift came upon all men unto justification of life”; or, as he urges the same view again still more pointedly, “As by one man’s disobedience many were made sinners; so by the obedience of One shall many be made righteous.”¹

This is the main argument of the Epistle, and it is reiterated so that neither Jew nor Gentile can possibly overlook it. Henceforth it is impossible for either party at Rome, for those who would confine the gift of Christ to the “chosen people,” or those who would extend it to the utmost, to question but that the Apostle has decided for, and taken his stand upon, the wider interpretation. The Jew at Rome must now determine upon one of two courses. If he will accept the teaching of Christ through the Apostle, His accredited organ, he must invite the Gentile to a share of the Gospel promises; he must acknowledge that a new covenant has been made between God and man, a covenant embracing the human race in general, and not confined, as of old, to one favoured nation. In such case, the only further question is, how far, or in what sense, the elder covenant is abolished; which is the question between the Judaizing and the Hellenizing Christians. If, on the other hand, he persists in refusing to acknowledge the common brotherhood of Jew and Gentile, and contends for the exclusive privileges which were formerly con-

¹ *Romans v. 19.*

fined to the Jews alone, he must make up his mind to separate himself from both the Gentile and the Christian converts, he must throw the Christian, as it were, into the arms of the Gentile, and allow them both to make common cause together ; for both must henceforth have a common bond of union in the principle of a broad and liberal equality before God. The Jew could not fail to see that by thus rejecting the leading principle of the new doctrine he would strengthen the position of the Christian in the eyes of the Gentile; he would be doing his best, against his will, and against the supposed interest of his own creed, to bring these two together, and unite them with a common bond of sentiment. Hence it became his policy to sow jealousy between them, to misrepresent the Christian, to seize upon every evil report against him, to believe the worst, and to magnify it to the utmost. Hence, when St. Paul first arrived on the coast of Italy, after his Epistle had been long received, and had produced its due effect among the Jewish community at Rome, the Jewish party, as we shall presently see, met him with the remark : " We desire to hear of thee what thou thinkest ; for as concerning this sect, we know that everywhere it is spoken against." ¹ Doubtless, the Jews at Rome had already spoken against it among both Jews and Gentiles. We shall see, as we proceed, how they continued to speak evil against it, till they succeeded in bringing upon it the distrust, the odium, and the persecution of Roman society.

St. Paul had left Corinth early in the spring of

¹ *Acts xxviii. 22.*

the year 58, in order that he might reach Jerusalem by the day of Pentecost, bearing with him the contribution which had been made in Macedonia, in Achaia, and elsewhere, for the poor brethren in the Jewish capital. The poverty of the brethren at Jerusalem appears from other places ; we may suppose, indeed, that some wealthier people attached themselves to the new faith at a distance, but on the actual spot of its birth, it was, like its Author, “ despised and rejected of men.” Learning that the Jews were lying in wait for him to kill him on his voyage into Syria, the Apostle made his way through Macedonia, and sailed from Philippi to Troas. From thence he passed by various stages to Cæsarea in Palestine. He was warned of the evil designs of the Jews against him in Jerusalem ; everywhere it was from the Jews, rather than from the Gentiles, that he had cause of apprehension ; but he declared that he was ready, not to be bound only, but to die there for the name of the Lord Jesus. The disciples were fain to let him depart from place to place ; his companions would not abandon him, and on their arrival at their destination they were gladly received by the faithful. Paul went, and invited a conference with James and other elders of the Church at Jerusalem. He proved himself faithful to the decrees of the council held there some years before ; and as a Jew by origin he presented himself in the Temple, and practised some of the ceremonies of the Jewish Law. He was there discovered by certain Jews of Asia, who had arrived for the celebration of the Pentecost, and who may perhaps have known him at Ephesus. These men excited a

commotion by accusing Paul of “teaching everywhere against the Law and against the Temple,” and of polluting the holy place by bringing Greeks within its precincts, which seems to have been a mere calumny. Nevertheless the people were stirred up to fury. They took Paul and drew him out of the Temple ; the city was in an uproar ; the Roman police interfered. Paul was cast into bonds, under the idea that he was a certain Egyptian, who had recently raised a sedition. The officer in command treated him, however, with considerable indulgence, and allowed him to address the multitude. His defence of himself clearly established his innocence of the charge of sedition ; but if the government was satisfied, the populace was all the more incensed. It became necessary to appease them, and the chief captain would have scourged Paul in their presence. Then it was that the Apostle appealed to his status as a Roman citizen, and insisted that he might not lawfully be punished, except after a legal trial and condemnation. Lysias at once desisted from blows, and it was in order to protect him from the fury of the excited populace that he took him away by force and brought him into the citadel.¹

The Apostle had appealed to the Roman law. He was by birth a Roman citizen, having derived the *civitas*, with its privileges and immunities, from his father before him. On a former occasion he had made a similar appeal to the magistrates at Philippi, and with complete success. “They feared,” it is said,

¹ *Acts xxii.*

“when they heard that they”—Paul, namely, and Silas—“were Romans. And they came and besought them, and brought them out, and desired them to depart out of the city.”¹ In the present case, the Roman officer was, no doubt, less indulgent. The occurrence of disturbances in the civil capital of Palestine was, we may well suppose, a more serious affair than such an incident in an ordinary provincial town. Nevertheless he recognised at once his prisoner’s claim to exemption from indignity and torture, for such was the unquestioned privilege of a Roman citizen. “It is a crime,” says Cicero, “to bind a Roman, an atrocity to scourge him.” He might be kept in safe custody within the residence of a magistrate, and be attached with a single chain to the arm of a soldier, until he could be brought to trial, when he might be condemned to banishment and the loss of *caput* or civic status. Such had been the law under the Republic, and the principle on which it rested was still acknowledged, although the emperors claimed to deal, when they pleased, more stringently with criminals in virtue of their *imperium* or their *tribunitian potestas*.

Paul was now brought before Felix, the imperial procurator of Judæa, at Cæsarea. He defended himself against the charge of sedition, and his judge was easily convinced that the real cause of the attack was simply his preaching the doctrine of the resurrection, and controverting the cherished dogmas of a particular sect among the Jews. On such a matter

¹ *Acts xvi. 38.*

he was himself profoundly indifferent; and finding no pretence for putting his prisoner to death as a public enemy, he did not choose to deliver him over to the violence of his own people. By detaining him in custody, he might expect perhaps to be approached with a bribe for his release. Festus, who succeeded Felix in the province two years later, found Paul still a captive, but, as it would seem, under lenient treatment. When the high priest and chief men of the Jews desired that he should be brought to Jerusalem, with the design of waylaying and killing him, Festus was inclined to indulge them; but Paul appealed as a Roman citizen to Cæsar; and though in the judgment of king Agrippa, in whose presence he was permitted to defend himself, he might have been set at once at liberty, it was determined that, as he had appealed from the emperor's officer to the emperor in person, he should be sent to Rome accordingly.¹

The Apostle's claim to enjoy the privileges of a Roman citizen had thus protected him from the fury of the Jewish mob, and from the insidious designs of his enemies in the ruling classes at Jerusalem; but it had interfered to prevent his complete deliverance, and it now subjected him to the perils of a trial among foreigners in a distant land, under conditions of which he could have little experience. But he felt perhaps secure in the justice of his cause, and the conviction that he had "done nothing worthy of death or of bonds," as a Roman judge at Rome could not fail to decide, in a controversy between a Roman citizen and

¹ *Acts xxv., xxvi.*

a Jewish accuser. He might rely upon the loyalty to the Roman government which he had evinced in his epistle to the Romans, as a public document to which he could legitimately appeal; in which he had plainly enjoined the disciples to be "subject unto the higher powers" . . . for "the powers that be are ordained of God :" adding, "for this cause pay you tribute also." He had refrained even from instituting any guild or confraternity among them, for of such social combinations or *collegia* the authorities were peculiarly jealous. Further, he might have some confidence in the reputed equity and mercy of the emperor; for the famous *Quinquennium Neronis* had hardly past. At all events, to Rome he was already bound for the sake of the Gospel; and setting aside, as he doubtless did, all regard for his own personal interests, he might expect that his position as an appellant to the chief ruler of the empire on the highest seat of judgment would give him a glorious opportunity, hardly otherwise to be looked for, of proclaiming the truth of Christ so that all the world might hearken. Already Agrippa had muttered, "Almost thou persuadest me to be a Christian." What if Cæsar himself should feel the force of Divine truth, and be "not almost, but altogether" persuaded? The course of events which actually followed, the trials and sufferings of the Faith in after times, the long and weary way through which the Church of Christ was appointed to struggle before it received toleration, much less acceptance, among the Gentiles, was doubtless hidden from his eyes. But may he not have indulged in a brighter vision, and beheld in his imagination the

powers and principalities of this world suddenly bowed down at the word of the preacher before God and His Christ? For a time, at least, such a vision might well continue to dazzle him.

Of the Apostle's voyage to Rome little need be said here. We should remark, however, that he was placed along with some other prisoners in custody of a centurion of Augustus's band, named Julius. It has been supposed that this band was a company of the prætorian guard, which may have been recently sent as an escort with Agrippa from Rome, and was now under orders to return. The gentile name of "Julius" may indicate some connection with the imperial court, the freedmen of the emperor being commonly admitted into his tent, and often placed in close attendance, whether civil or military, upon him. We may even conjecture that the kindness with which this centurion regarded Paul was due to some injunction from Agrippa, who had evidently been interested in his defence of himself. The date of the Apostle's sailing may be fixed to a late day in August, A.D. 60. The destination of his vessel was Adramyttium, a port in Thrace, from whence he would probably have been carried overland to Dyrrhachium, and so into Italy by Brundisium. But the course of the voyagers was first delayed, and then altered by various circumstances. They were driven eventually upon the rocky coast of Melita, or Malta, towards the close of autumn, when the season for sailing had come to an end, and it was not till after a sojourn of three months on that island that Paul embarked again for Italy, about the middle of February, A.D. 61. The corn-vessel of

Alexandria, to which he had been transferred at Myra in Cilicia, had become a total wreck. He was now placed on board another craft of the same class, which was bound for Puteoli, the port where the large vessels which crossed the Mediterranean transferred their freight to smaller barges adapted to the coasting trade of the Italian peninsula. With the commencement of spring, the grain-fleets from Egypt made their appearance in the Bay of Naples. Their arrival was eagerly expected by the people; and the government, conscious that the tranquillity of Rome depended upon the punctual supply of its daily food from a distance, was often disturbed by apprehensions of even a momentary delay. The corn-ships were allowed, as a special favour, to come into the bay with their top-sails set, in order that their speed might not be for an instant retarded, while all others lowered them in token of respect for the superior greatness of Italy, or of the goddess Minerva, whose statue crowned the promontory of Surrentum, or possibly of the emperor himself, who had resided so many years, not long before this time, on the opposite island of Capreæ. The people rushed in crowds to the mole to greet them, and made their auspicious arrival a pretext for a public holiday.

Puteoli, the great haven of Italy, was no doubt the resort of numerous foreigners. There the new-comers from Judæa found, as might be expected, "many brethren." The centurion who had thus far conducted Paul, and who had felt himself at liberty to allow his passage from the East to be protracted through six months, made no difficulty now in

granting him the further delay of a week to confer with his countrymen at this spot. It was necessary, indeed, to keep him securely. When there had seemed a chance of his escaping along with the other prisoners, while their ship was in peril, the guards would have had no scruple in putting them all to death at once ; but as long as he could depend on being able to deliver up his charge at the end, their keeper, it seems, was not required to expedite their arrival. This delay allowed the news of the Apostle's landing to be conveyed to the disciples at Rome, which was one hundred and forty miles distant from Puteoli, and some of them set forth directly to meet him. Paul bade farewell to his friends at his place of landing, and was conveyed along the Appian road towards the great city. At a station called Appii Forum, about forty miles from Rome, and again at "the Three Taverns," the next stage, he was met by some of the brethren, and was, no doubt, much comforted by the assurance that his coming was regarded with deep interest by the society to which he had addressed his epistle three years before. He "thanked God," it is said, and "took courage."

The arrival of St. Paul at Rome, and his interview with the Jews there will be most fitly described in the terms of the simple narrative which closes the book of the Acts of the Apostles.

"When he came to Rome," says St. Luke, who had accompanied him on his voyage, and was now attached to his fortunes, though not, it would seem, himself a prisoner, "the centurion delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard, but Paul was

suffered to dwell by himself with a soldier that kept him." On this there will be more to be said at a later period. "And it came to pass that, after three days, Paul called the chief of the Jews together, and when they were come together, he said unto them, Men and brethren, though I have committed nothing against the people or customs of our fathers, yet was I delivered prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans; who, when they had examined me, would have let me go, because they found no cause of death in me. But when the Jews spake against it I was constrained to appeal unto Cæsar; not that I had ought to accuse my nation of. For this cause, therefore, have I called for you, to see you and to speak with you; because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain." And they said unto him, "We neither received letters out of Judæa concerning thee, neither any of the brethren showed or spake any harm of thee. But we desire to hear what thou thinkest; for as concerning this sect we know that it is everywhere spoken against." From these few words it appears, as also from the tenor of Paul's discourse which follows, that the Jews with whom he now reasoned were not members of a specific Christian church. No such organized church, it would seem, had yet been formed at Rome at all; but all the Jewish residents in the capital had, of course, heard rumours of the spread of the new belief; they had heard of the new sect arising in the bosom of Judaism which was everywhere spoken against by the great body of their fellow-countrymen. Many among them were already leaning towards these so-called Good

Tidings, and many more were seekers after the truth, who had not yet imbibed an intelligent appreciation of it. All, perhaps, had received the epistle which St. Paul had addressed to the Jews at Rome, and in the general disturbance of men's faith, and the excitement of an age much addicted to spiritual inquiry, there were few who did not hail with satisfaction the arrival of one who claimed to speak with authority upon a subject so generally interesting. It has been asked how it was that the Jews at Rome should have received no intimation from their brethren in Judæa of the visit they were about to expect. Some may imagine that the inhabitants of Palestine, both Jew and Christian, concluded that the Apostle's captivity was but a sure precursor of his execution, and did not anticipate that, if he ever arrived at Rome, anything more would be heard of him. The unbelievers, at least, did not allow themselves to apprehend that his arrival at the great focus of all secular business would have any effect upon the worldly minds of its vain and dissolute inhabitants. It may, perhaps, be farther alleged that Paul had embarked at Sidon later than the usual time of sailing from Palestine, and that he had reached Rome somewhat earlier than the usual arrivals in the following season.

However this may be, and the question, though difficult, is not important, the chief of the Jewish community appointed, after the meeting, a day for more particular explanation and conference. Then it was that Paul unfolded to his fellow-countrymen the scheme of salvation through the Gospel, such as he had already expounded it in his elaborate epistle.

“The salvation of God,” he said, “is sent unto the Gentiles, and they will hear it.” Thereupon the Jews departed, “and had much reasoning among themselves;” to what effect we know not. But the Apostle, though he had appealed to the emperor on the charges preferred against him at home, seems not to have been admitted to a hearing in the august presence. Perhaps the papers and witnesses required for the case had not arrived; his accusers would, no doubt, make all possible delay if they thought it would be decided against them, while he was powerless himself to accelerate a decision in his favour. He was suffered to remain two whole years, as it would seem, without an interrogatory; still in the keeping of a soldier, no doubt, but, nevertheless, in a separate or private dwelling which he hired for himself; at liberty to receive all that came to him, though restrained, we must suppose, from going abroad to them. So it was that he “continued to teach and preach the things which concern the Lord Jesus with all confidence, no man forbidding him.”¹

¹ *Acts xxviii. 31.*

CHAPTER IV.

POLITICAL CONDITION OF ROME ON ST. PAUL'S ARRIVAL.

ON the death of the emperor Claudius, who is supposed to have been poisoned by his consort Agrippina, (A.D. 54), Britannicus, the son of his former empress, Messalina, had been quietly set aside. The succession to the imperial power had been conveyed by the acclamations of the Prætorians, under the direction of their prefect, Burrus, together with the consent of the senate, to Nero the son of Agrippina by her former husband, Domitius. Of the two rivals Nero was somewhat the elder, being now seventeen, while Britannicus was a mere stripling about four years younger. Nero had, moreover, been formerly adopted by Claudius, and admitted by him into the Claudian gens, which might give him a technical claim to precedence. But the rules of succession to the imperial power were, up to this time, very unsettled ; the prerogatives which the imperator affected were still supposed in theory to be the free gift of the senate and of the people represented by the senate, and, under the circumstances, the Cæsar's heir-presumptive was enabled to assume the functions of imperial autocracy without the raising of any constitutional question. Burrus had been already appointed a tutor or guardian

of the youthful prince by his crafty mother, and she had taken care to associate with this sturdy soldier the philosopher Seneca, who bore a high reputation among civilians both for wisdom and integrity. Nero was himself popular on account of his youth, his pleasing figure, and some reputed accomplishments. He shone the more in the eyes of the citizens from the apparent contrast between him and his weak and decrepit parent, who had outraged the pride of the magnates, and made himself the laughing-stock of the populace of Rome. There can be little doubt that Agrippina had herself studied to bring Claudius into ridicule, in order to disparage his true son Britannicus, and elevate her own offspring in popular estimation. It is probable that the character for mental and bodily infirmity which history has fastened upon the wretched Claudius has been too highly coloured, through the scandals to which the last of his consorts gave circulation in her Memoirs after his decease.

Nero succeeded to the empire in the year 54, seven years before the arrival of St. Paul at Rome. He had been already married in his sixteenth year to Octavia, a child like himself, the daughter of Claudius, by Messalina. The union had been arranged for political purposes, to facilitate the young prince's succession. There was no liking, no agreement of tastes and habits between the two ; their cohabitation had been brief and barren. For the first years of his reign Nero continued to submit himself to the restraints of his imperious mother, and of the well-meaning and careful guardians she had appointed him, who concerted together their measures for keeping him under

tutelage. Gradually, indeed, he broke loose from them. The poisoning of Britannicus, if such a crime be justly imputed to him, was effected certainly without the complicity of Seneca or Burrus, though we can hardly doubt that it was instigated by Agrippina; and it is too true that when the story was bruited through Rome without an effective denial, both Seneca and Burrus agreed to throw a veil over it; nor were they, perhaps, displeased at the removal, by whatever means, of a possible pretender to the sovereign power, which was now lodged practically in their own hands. But Nero had fallen under other influence than either his mother's or his tutors': his favourite Acte, a Grecian concubine, first gained an ascendancy over him. He now plunged more and more deeply into dissipation of every kind. He disgraced himself in the eyes of the nobles by condescending to play, sing, and drive his chariot at the public spectacles; and when he found himself losing ground with all classes, whose respect he could not but feel to be valuable, he lost all self-control, and abandoned himself to vice and crime without further scruple. The first five years, indeed, of Nero's principate were celebrated as a reign of equity and honourable conduct; but this famous season was succeeded by a career of debauchery and cruelty, to which it would be difficult to find a parallel. The murder of his mother Agrippina was followed by many other murders, and still more judicial executions. The ranks of the aristocracy were decimated from motives of fear, and sometimes of mere caprice. Feeling himself an object of detestation to the class he had most deeply injured, the

tyrant was impelled to still further violence for his own protection. Tyranny was avenged by conspiracy, conspiracy was punished by tyranny redoubled, not in the city only, but in the provinces. The jealousy of a prince who reigned by no intrinsic force of mind or character was excited against all possible rivals. Corbulo, the most victorious of his captains, was stricken down by the imperial mandate on the Euphrates. Burrus was fortunate in dying in his bed; but Seneca, along with some of the chief nobility, was, at a later period, required to put himself to death on a charge of treason. The emperor's sole reliance now rested upon his favour with the reckless mob of the city, and the mutual jealousies of the magnates themselves.

The great men of Rome at this period were, in the first place, the descendants in the fourth generation of the illustrious houses which had contended one with another for the governments under the lead of Cæsar or Pompeius. The civil wars together with the massacres and proscriptions which accompanied them had made terrible havoc of the oldest families of the city. The progress of enervating luxury, the spread of gross debauchery, and the desperate reluctance of an indolent aristocracy to engage in the bonds of legitimate wedlock, had materially reduced the genuine stock of the older Romans; while the national institution of adoption, on the other hand, had largely replenished it with baser blood. The names of the great gentes of the Republic still stood, for the most part, among the foremost in the annals of the empire. The Julii, the Claudii, the Cornelii, Æmilii, Asinii, and many

others, became more widely diffused than ever, and were not less highly ennobled in the public service than at the period of their most brilliant historic fame. But the men who enjoyed these sounding names, and very commonly the patrimonies that descended with them, were, in innumerable instances, the sons or grandsons of slaves or clients, foreigners by extraction, who had thus become introduced, surreptitiously, as it were, into the genuine Roman houses. It was by succession to the traditions of the ancient houses that they imbibed the character of the race which had preceded them. They looked with extreme mortification upon the fortunes of the family which had gained the highest place among them, though it had been originally no higher, but rather lower than themselves. Even the first Cæsar, who represented the Julian gens, was a scion of a house noble rather than illustrious. The second Cæsar had been adopted into the Julian from the Octavian, which was still less eminent than the Julian. The Claudi, among whom Octavianus Cæsar sought an heir by adoption, were, indeed, more illustrious than either of these ; but the Domitii, from whom Nero himself descended, though highly respectable, could claim no precedence before many others. The jealousy which such comparison excited could not fail to engender ill-will and evil designs. The emperor was only too prone to suspect evil where none might be intended. He was surrounded, of course, by spies and flatterers, who imbued him with distrust of the most loyal of his subjects ; it was only too easy to discover the means of getting rid of those who seemed most dangerous ; the actual necessities

of empire where the prince's position at the head of a people dependent upon shows and largesses demanded constant supplies, impelled him to exactions and confiscations for the replenishment of his coffers, till a desperate contest was excited between him and his nobles; and the only question seemed to be, whether he should crush them or they should succeed in first destroying him.

In this state of barely-veiled hostility between the Cæsar and the whole class of the powerful and wealthy citizens—the holders of the chief civil offices and most important military posts, the ministers of the state-religion, the possessors of the widest estates in Italy and the provinces, the patrons of the longest retinues of clients and dependents, the owners of the most numerous hordes of slaves, the men, finally, of most liberal culture throughout the empire—the emperor, himself but one of their class, was obliged to look about for some effective means of retaining his isolated position at their head. He was a tyrant, and the first and most obvious defence of tyranny is the army. The great military force of the empire was comprised in twenty-five or thirty legions, which, with their auxiliary cohorts, might amount to 300,000 soldiers. These numbers, however imposing in the aggregate, sufficed to furnish but slender detachments for the defence of the many important stations at which they were quartered. The frontier provinces were assigned to the direct control of the emperor, as commander-in-chief of the whole Roman people. The more tranquil regions were placed under the appointment of the senate. Such, at least, had been

the disposition of military affairs made by Augustus ; but the whole army had fallen in later times under the imperial prerogative. The defence, however, of the frontiers required the concentration of several legions on the lines of the Rhine, the Danube, and the Euphrates. The captain in charge of these powerful forces was himself an emperor on a smaller scale, and the Cæsar was often as much afraid to recall as to leave him in his supreme authority at a distance. The spirit, indeed, of military obedience was still wonderfully strong throughout the Roman ranks, and the commander-in-chief could depend for the most part on the fidelity even of these powerful lieutenants, who ascribed to his auspices all their successes, and surrendered to him the glory of their triumphs. Perhaps he looked further to their mutual jealousy to prevent their plotting against him. The forces of the empire might thus be held in equilibrium ; but they were too far removed from the centre, and generally too fully occupied in the defence of the provinces, to be directly available for the protection of the imperial person in the city.

Cæsar was obliged to look for his body-guard nearer home. Since the disturbed era of the Civil Wars, with their proscriptions and usurpations, the men who successively leapt into power had found it necessary to secure their personal safety by surrounding themselves with a few companies of picked soldiers, on whose fidelity they could fully depend. Julius Cæsar had rejected this unconstitutional resource with a too generous contempt, and he was assassinated. Antonius and Octavius both consented

to adopt it, and they survived. After the settlement of the empire, Augustus felt himself free to dispense with it; he removed, at least, the body-guard from immediate attendance; but he took care to have some cohorts of armed men, perhaps 12,000 in number, quartered in the city close at hand, under the name of an urban garrison. Tiberius had taken a more decisive step for his personal security. He had collected these cohorts, increasing the number of men to 20,000, in a fortified camp on the outskirts of the city, and placed them under an officer whom he styled the prefect of his *prætorium*. Such was the origin of the “*prætorian guards*,” who played so great a part in the later history of Rome. This institution, like all others of the imperial *régime*, had its foundation in the habits of the Republic. It had been usual for the imperator, called at first the *prætor* or leader, at the head of his legions, to attach to himself a special retinue of men and officers, who constituted his *prætorium*; but the tent of the imperator in the field, or his residence in winter quarters, obtained the same appellation, and from thence the term *prætorium* came to be applied to the residence of a governor, to the palace of the emperor himself, or to the splendid dwellings of any great officers or nobles. This is to be borne in mind, as it bears on the interpretation of an important passage connected with St. Paul’s residence at Rome, which will come under discussion as we proceed. At present we hasten on to complete our rapid view of the political condition of the city.

The multitude of the free Roman citizens resident in the capital constituted a power in the state on

which the emperor might, perhaps, more securely rely than on either the nobility or the army. Julius Cæsar had placed himself at the head of the commonalty, and pretended to represent the interests of the masses, which at an earlier epoch had ranged themselves under the patronage of Marius and Saturninus. Cæsar had beaten down the Optimates, and destroyed the last remains of the revived oligarchic constitution of Sulla. As dictator, he had undertaken to reconstitute the republic; he had democratized the senate, and extended the franchise so as to embrace foreigners of various classes and communities. To Cæsar had succeeded Octavius, and around Octavius had circulated the aspirations of the new citizens, the new senators, the foreigners, and provincials. The second of the emperors had, indeed, striven to reconcile the claims of the old families with the pretensions of the new; but he still avowed himself the champion of the commons; the powers of the tribuneship, which he placed in the very front of his prerogatives, proclaimed him protector of the plebs. The emperors who next succeeded, popularly known as a Tiberius and a Caius, continued still to be regarded as pre-eminently the tribunes of the people, and to remind the multitude of the citizens by their names of the popular heroes, the Gracchi of the ancient republic. The commonalty of Rome was, indeed, at this time a mongrel race. Their votes in the campus had been taken from them; they had absorbed into their body the representatives of a hundred provincial communities. The pure Roman blood had been almost lost in the Italian; the Italian had become largely diluted by the admixture of Greeks,

Africans; Spaniards, and many others. The constant progress of enfranchisement had poured into this compound the blood of multitudes of slaves from the barbarian races on the frontiers. Roman citizenship now conferred hardly any special privilege, except that of partaking in the dole of grain. The emperor fed his people, and his people looked wistfully to him for their daily bread. They feared that the revolution which might be caused by his sudden decease would cut off at once their daily supply ; and their living depended upon his life. So, at least, they vaguely imagined ; and it is not surprising that, with such a notion floating in their minds, they clung instinctively to him, and encouraged him to depend on their devoted adherence.

Augustus, the real founder of the empire, had effected an eminent stroke of policy in the encouragement he gave to the deification of his deceased parent Julius. The deification of mortals was an idea wholly foreign to the Roman of the commonwealth. A very ancient poetical legend ascribed, indeed, such an apotheosis to Romulus ; but the divinity of the first founder of the state had been almost wholly merged in that of Mars, his celestial progenitor. None of the early kings of Rome had enjoyed such a distinction after him, and under the free-state the common equality of all had made it impossible to elevate any one citizen, however distinguished, to a place among the potentates of the spiritual world. Certain families of the Republic, however, prided themselves on the family fiction that they were descended from the companions of demigods and heroes. Some pre-

tence of this kind was set up by his grateful countrymen for Scipio as the offspring of Jupiter. Julius Cæsar thus openly proclaimed himself descended from Venus, to whom he dedicated a temple under the title of Genitrix, the ancestress.

This assumption of a divine origin seems to have been received with little remark by the dictator's contemporaries, but it bore fruit after his decease. The citizens lamented the loss of their hero, and bestowed upon him the unprecedented distinction of burial within the walls ; but it was by the foreigners, probably, who regarded him as their special patron, that the impulse was given to the ascription to him of divine honours. A shrine was immediately erected over his remains, and this was soon converted into a temple in which a special cultus was performed and sanctioned. It was affirmed that his soul was received into the heavens, and had been rendered visible to mortals in the comet which appeared at the period of his death. Augustus perceived at once the importance of this popular movement. But, cautious as he was, and well aware how alien hero-worship was from the temper of the Romans, fearing, no doubt, a reaction of popular feeling, he professed to forbid them to draw the natural inference that he, too, as a descendant of the divine Julius, partook of a divine origin. The adulation, however, of the degenerate people outran his forbearance. All he could do was to prohibit the worship of himself, while still alive, in the city ; in the provinces the ardour of the Greeks and Orientals was not to be checked. In Asia Minor, more especially, the god Augustus seems to have usurped the honours

of the celestial hierarchy. Temples arose to this upstart divinity on all sides. Flatterers and poets were not to be restrained by the official reserve of the chief of the State himself. Virgil and Horace did not scruple to use the language of religious devotion towards the divine son of the divine Julius. The religious principle, which had been reduced to the lowest ebb by the extinction of belief in the old national mythologies, seemed to throw itself with ardour upon the new and gracious object which was thus presented to it. The emperor, it felt, was a real, substantial power; it could not tell whether Jupiter and Juno were any powers at all. The emperor was both beauteous in his person and beneficent in his character; the reputed deities of the olden time, however glorious in popular imagination, had been seen by no man, and no man could trace the stream of their bounty to his own door. On the death of Augustus the Senate was not indisposed to gratify the general sentiment by pretending formally to enrol him among the denizens of Olympus. His successor reigned thenceforth by a fresh title. Besides the consent of Senate and people, he too might claim, like Augustus, to be heir-presumptive to divine honours. The imperial family began now to assume a definite position apart from that of their highest nobles. The admitted divinity of their ancestors invested them with a nimbus of glory which dazzled the eyes of the multitude. They reigned in some sense by divine right. Though the Senate eventually rejected the claim advanced for the deification of Tiberius, whom it detested, the popular notion of the divinity of his family became rooted

more deeply in the minds of the people with each new accession, until it recognised in the youthful Nero the representative of a sacred principle. This sentiment the emperor studied to maintain by attention to every vulgar prejudice and caprice. He gratified the people not only with doles and largesses, but with every new and exciting amusement he could devise for them ; and with no show were they more delighted than with that of their charming Cæsar singing, playing, and driving in the circus, while a zest was added to their enjoyment by the disgust such exhibitions were seen to excite in the more staid and solemn citizens of the older race. Thus the absence of a great military force at the centre of government might be sufficiently compensated by the passionate devotion of the multitude.

But, in fact, the prince, the nobles, and the people were all bound together in mutual support by their common peril from the overwhelming crowd of slaves which pressed on all sides upon them. The prince himself was lord of thousands of these degraded beings, who enjoyed no political status, nor any social rights. The households or “families” of the magnates were hardly less numerous than that of the emperor himself. Stringent law and unflinching severity were required to keep these elements of disorder from bursting forth. The masters lived with a tacit understanding that they should support one another to the uttermost in their dealings with the dangerous class among which they daily moved. A frightful instance is recorded at this very time of the barbarity of their discipline, when, on the murder of

a certain Pedanius by some of his slaves, the emperor was urged to enforce the ancient law, and deliver over his whole “family,” amounting to 400 persons, for execution. It would seem, indeed, that this wholesale massacre was regarded as a pedantic recurrence to an obsolete ordinance; the mass of the people murmured at it, just as the populace in England murmured at last against the execution of the barbarous laws against heresy, which they had originally sanctioned and approved. Nevertheless it was judged necessary, or at least expedient, to carry out the sentence. But if the great nobles and slaveholders were thus afraid of their slaves, the common citizens, who, for the most part, were destitute of slaves of their own, and depended in their abject poverty on the State provision, were jealous of a class who might become their rivals. While law and usage were very favourable to easy terms of enfranchisement, the people would generally discourage and resist it, and would lend all their influence to support the master against the bondman.

Such were the forces which preserved at this period the social equilibrium at Rome, and contributed year by year to the equalization of all classes of freemen, under the control of a despot, who was himself the development of a sentiment quite as much as he was the creation of brute force. The Romans submitted to the emperor because they believed in the emperor; and they believed in him perhaps the more intensely because they had nearly lost all other belief. The last age of the Republic had witnessed a rapid disintegration of creeds. The scepticism of the Greeks,

to which the Romans were introduced at the time of their conquest of the Hellenic world, had come suddenly upon them, and had found them wholly unprepared to resist, or even to reason upon it. They had continued for ages to practise their ancient forms of worship, and to recite the names of the divinities accepted among them, without bestowing a thought perhaps on the actual truth of the legends connected with them, or the powers and attributes claimed for them by immemorial tradition. Their national faith was like the poet's description of the venerable oak, spreading its arms far and wide over the field around it, adorned with many ancient trophies and cherished associations, but putting forth no leaves of moral practice, and resting on no roots of intelligent conviction. It was ready to fall at the first blast of free inquiry ; and the assault made upon it by the Greek philosophers was both vehement and persistent. But the Romans easily satisfied themselves with a compromise between faith and usage. They clung to their outward forms, their rites and ceremonies ; they still recited their fanciful legends and traditions, at the same time that they openly rejected all genuine belief in the objects they professed most punctually to adore. The famous speech of Cæsar in the Senate on the sentence to be pronounced against the Catilinarian conspirators is a type of the sentiments most current among the statesmen of the day. The supreme Pontiff, the chief of the State religion, publicly declared his denial of a future retribution, the cardinal doctrine of all Greek and Roman mythology, nor, it would seem, did any one rebuke him. This

disbelief in a future state was, no doubt, widely diffused among the cultured class at Rome, which imbibed its sentiments mainly from Grecian sources. Such a disbelief never, indeed, penetrated very deep among the masses, which reason less and are more acutely sensible to moral feeling. Nevertheless, the disturbances of the civil wars had so broken up the ideas and principles of the Roman people that they had easily suffered the services of religion to fall into collapse. The temples had everywhere succumbed to neglect and decay. The temple worship had been very generally disused and forgotten. In setting himself to restore the manners and morals of the Romans Augustus fixed his attention on the outward condition of the old religion. He was careful to remind his people how it had been affirmed by some of the wisest of the ancients that they owed their eminent good fortune mainly to their reverence for the gods. Other nations had been not less brave, others had been even more acute and intelligent, but none had equalled them in the cultivation of the true sentiment of devotion. He could venture to assure them that their recent distresses had been inflicted upon them by the resentment of the gods, whom they had of late so impiously abandoned. He sternly recalled them to a sense of the duties they owed to their divinities, and of the benefits they might expect to accrue by confessing their sins towards them. The outward revival of the national religion which ensued is one of the most curious incidents in history. It will be fitting to give here some attention to it, both on account of its own general interest,

and in order to prepare us for understanding the religious sentiment as it prevailed at Rome a hundred years later.

The cult of the Roman divinities had been maintained, for the most part, by the honourable obligations immemorially imposed upon the great national families. Every gens was bound to keep up the private worship of its patron demigod, and, in many cases, to maintain the temples of the greater divinities, whose service was of public importance. The chief deities of Hellas had been introduced gradually into Rome, but in almost every case under names of Italian origin. It was only in the later ages of the Republic that these gods of Greece had been generally recognised by the whole Roman people. Their temples had, for the most part, been erected by the piety, or, perhaps, the fancy of victorious captains returning from their foreign expeditions. The care of these edifices had not been assumed by the people themselves, but had been intrusted to the descendants of their founder, and they had been kept in repair, not so much probably by the revenues settled upon them, as by the spontaneous but long unfailing devotion of the chief of these families. The noble-minded Catulus had testified his public spirit in restoring the great temple of Jupiter, Best and Greatest, at his own charge. But in the general decay of religious feeling such spirit would be rarely manifested. The great families were decimated by slaughter or impoverished by confiscations. So it was that at the end of the civil wars, when the Romans took breath and looked around them, they saw the shrines of their divinities falling

on all sides into ruin, their sacred images foul, it was said, with smoke, or mouldering with mildew.

About fifty years ago, when our English people were beginning to recover from the vast expenses and absorbing interest of the greatest of our own wars, it was remarked, by a shrewd observer, that the rural churches throughout the country were actually tottering to their fall. There was, indeed, far less excuse for the neglect by which these edifices had suffered ; but such had been this neglect and its consequences, so hopeless, to all appearance, the reparation and revival which alone could save them, that he foresaw their utter destruction in the course of the half-century which has since elapsed. But from that moment, it may be remarked, the era of church repair commenced among us, and the happy result is now conspicuously manifest. So, also, at this period of its lowest outward condition, when the revival of its ancient fanes and the ancient spirit of temple-building might seem least to be expected, Augustus undertook to restore the worship of the gods of Rome, and outwardly, at least, he did restore it. The particular duty of renovation had lapsed to the nation itself ; and Augustus, as censor, was the guardian of public duty. Accordingly he rebuilt, for his own contribution, the temples of Jupiter, of Mars, of Cybele; of Apollo ; he deputed to his empress Livia the restoration of the fanes of Juno. He invited his nobles to emulate his example. New edifices, ampler and richer than before, rose on every side, devoted to the ancient deities of Olympus ; but the national faith was more popularly resuscitated by the dedication of

lesser shrines to the Lares, the homelier patrons of domestic life, which were placed at the corners of the streets in every quarter of the city. These were modest chapels, doubtless of small dimensions ; but it would be to these, numerous as they were, that Virgil specially alludes, when he speaks of the “ three hundred goodly shrines ” erected by Augustus “ throughout the whole city.”

Such was this great work of outward “ restoration,” to which it would be hard to find a parallel until our own times, and except in our own land. It would be deeply interesting could we trace the internal effect which it actually produced. We shall recognise, indeed, as we proceed, the prevalence of a deeper and a more extended moral sentiment among the cultured classes of the city, together with a philosophical theory broader in its principles, and issuing in a more healthy moral practice ; and these we may willingly ascribe, in some degree, to the sure effect of any renewal of spiritual devotion, however false its objects, however prone it may be to superstition and idolatry. The wide gulf in religious sentiment between Lucretius and Virgil, and hardly less between Catullus and Horace, marks the spiritual advance which had been made in a single generation. We shall see reason to judge that even the outward revival under Augustus contributed to the preparation of Rome for the preaching of the Gospel by the Apostle. Augustus himself was blind, it may be readily believed, to any such moral issues. The effect he wished and studied to produce was not the revival and strengthening of moral sentiment, but merely a practical recurrence to

the ancient modes of life, which had marked the simpler and happier ages of the Republic, and were supposed in his view to be intimately connected with them. He renewed the sumptuary regulations of antiquity, encouraged legitimate marriage according to the formal prescriptions of the state religion, revived the study of law and ritual, defined and maintained the institutions of property, and recalled the Romans to a sense of the dignity of their fathers' customs, even of their dress and their domestic habits. He looked backwards when he should have looked forwards; for the idea of human progress and improvement was unknown to the statesmen of antiquity. The old ways, they were assured, were still the best, and every decline from them was, in their view, a loss which could only be repaired by formally and punctually reverting to them, as far as change of circumstances would allow. Enough, perhaps, if they could still cling to the skirt of antiquity, which it was impossible wholly to recover. But meanwhile other forces were actually at work, and we may believe that beneath the surface of mere formal observance there was a truly spiritual revival also in progress, which will present us with considerations of the deepest interest. But this revival will deserve to be traced back through the earlier stages of its life and progress.

CHAPTER V.

CONCEPTIONS OF THE UNITY OF GOD AND THE COMMON
BROTHERHOOD OF MANKIND ENGENDERED BY THE
CONQUESTS OF ALEXANDER THE GREAT.

THE principle of monarchical government was no longer foreign to the ideas of the Romans at the period of the establishment of the empire. Augustus, it may be said, rather followed the national sentiment in this respect than led it. The Romans had flourished, indeed, and conquered for five centuries under a Republic, and they still looked back to the free-state as the period of their most transcendent glories ; but free institutions had broken down under the stress of their military policy, and had proved themselves to be no longer available after the catastrophe of the civil wars. Monarchy, on the other hand, had recently been rendered familiar to them under the forms in which it was presented by the Oriental communities over which they had triumphed. These forms had been made peculiarly attractive by the elegance and splendour of the Eastern civilization. No Roman citizen had returned from his sojourn in Asia without confessing that the East had far exceeded the West in the arts and luxuries which impart its highest charm to life. The seductive influence of Hellenic or

Asiatic culture had led many minds to regard with favour the political institutions under which that culture had so conspicuously flourished. Many of the leading statesmen of the declining commonwealth were beginning to acquiesce in the tendency of public affairs to the elevation of a single personal ruler at Rome. If the monarchies of an Attalus, an Antiochus, or a Perseus had proved themselves unequal to contend with the sons of Roman freedom, it might be remembered that these states were but the fragments of the mighty empire of Alexander, and a hope might still be cherished that the empire of Alexander would be reproduced under the sovereignty of Cæsar or Augustus.

But the leading idea of monarchy, as represented by the Eastern communities, was the equality of all under the primacy of a single individual. Monarchy, in the view of the Roman world, was the final triumph of democracy over aristocracy, of the many over the few. More than this, it was the triumph of the provinces over the city, of subjects over their masters, of the alien races of the world-wide empire over the race which had conquered and gradually absorbed them. When the bulk of the subject races pronounced in favour of monarchy, the knell of the old exclusive principle sounded. All the communities of the ancient world had at first been isolated and exclusive ; they had striven to set up a moral barrier between themselves and strangers, by creeds, cults, and social usages, peculiar to themselves, on which they placed their reliance, while they stiffly refused to communicate them to others. No ancient race had indulged in this

isolation more proudly than the Roman ; but, again and again, the Romans had been compelled to relax from it, and to accept fraternity with their neighbours. It was under the empire of the Cæsars that this process of mutual assimilation was at last completed, and the polity which it developed saved Rome from premature decay by transforming the Romans themselves into cosmopolites, and the cosmopolites of Greece and Asia into Romans.

The wider view of the equality and fraternity of man which was thus opened, had received its first impulse from the Macedonian conquests. The policy of the great Alexander, blending, as it did, Greece and Asia together, and diffusing through so large a portion of the world's surface the conception of generic unity, had suddenly caused a radical and lasting revolution in human ideas. Doubtless many things had been long working together to this end ; the designs of Providence for the teaching of all nations and kindreds that they are the common children of one divine Parent, had been long ripening to their appointed crisis ; but it was by the brief ten years of Alexander's rule in Asia that the great result was actually accomplished, and the conception of universal brotherhood so firmly established in men's minds that it has never since been obliterated. This idea was, no doubt, temporarily obscured after the disruption of Alexander's dominions ; yet the Greek, the Syrian, the Persian, and the Egyptian kingdoms never felt themselves alien from one another. They still retained a common language, a common religion, a common sense of federal unity. They were prepared to look with a common

anticipation to the spiritual revelations which they already expected to be made to them.

The doctrine of the unity of mankind is recognised as a fundamental principle of the Gospel, and this unity is further declared therein to be not only natural, as derived from one common human parent, but spiritual, as of a common spiritual family, brought into covenant with a common God, and Father of all. But of the civilized peoples existing at the date of our Lord's coming, there was none to which such an idea as this last was more repugnant than to the Jewish. It might well seem impossible to convince the Jew that he was spiritually connected with the Barbarian and the Scythian, when he held himself wholly distinct from the heathen Greek, and could hardly reconcile himself to communion with the Samaritan on his own borders. This, however, was the first problem which our Lord's disciples set before themselves, as soon as they could arrive at the true Christian conclusion in their own minds. The teaching of their divine Master had brought this conclusion before them, and the assistance of the Holy Spirit had matured the conviction of it in their hearts. After a debate and a struggle, they resolved to throw themselves frankly into it. St. Peter preached it at Jerusalem to the assembled brethren, and prevailed on the whole body to accept it, and make it the fundamental basis of their teaching. St. Paul and his immediate associates carried it onward among the nations, declaring it first to the Jews and afterwards to the Gentiles. The nations among whom they preached it were those which had once been subjects of the Macedonian,

and were now subjects of the Roman empire. We have next to examine what preparation for its reception had been generally made, and more particularly what welcome it might expect to obtain in the great city, which had inherited the social traditions of Greece and Asia, and, to a great extent, had incorporated them with its own.

The theory, indeed, that mankind are originally derived from one stock, together with the moral results which follow from it, had been partially admitted among the philosophers of Greece from an early period. While the poets were still dreaming of Autochthons and Aborigines, sprung independently from the soil on which they were born, Pythagoras had asserted the common parentage of the whole animal creation, and the transmigration of souls from man to the brutes, and from the brutes back again to man. It is true that this wild speculation had been long rejected, and lived, at the epoch before us, only in poetical traditions ; but it had given place to another, not less significant of the essentially unity of mankind, namely, that the human soul might be transfused after death into the divine, and become finally absorbed in it. The unity of God and the unity of human nature, thus fancifully developed, were the dogmas which stamped the character of the Pythagorean teaching. From Pythagoras we are told to date the first assault on the old Hellenic mythology. Many refined religious sentiments, far beyond the scope of the ancient Polytheism, are preserved to us from the ages which followed, particularly in the remains of Euripides, the preacher of popular ethics, and in the more subtle

and searching reasoning of Socrates. The moral tone of religion continued to rise with the decline of outward ceremonial superstitions. A further advance becomes conspicuous in Plato and Aristotle, and the same progress is maintained in the schools which these masters founded, or which sprang out of their teaching. The theory of Epicurus, however negative as regards the being of God and a Providence, is generous in its view of human relations ; but it is in the philosophy of Zeno and the Stoics that we shall remark the nearest approach to the true Christian standard both of belief and practice. This standard, indeed, the Stoics never reached, not even when they had the light of the Gospel displayed before their eyes ; but, it may be allowed that they had made a sensible advance towards it in some essential particulars, long before the first dawn of Christian light had glimmered upon the world.

The doctrine of the unity of man was involved in the primary teaching of the Stoics. Zeno believed himself a citizen neither of Athens nor Sparta, nor of Tyre, where he is said to have been born, but of the universe itself. His early home, placed midway between the universal emporia of Antioch and Alexandria, might remind him on either side of the equal terms on which all races met in those marts of commerce ; and the traditions of Tyre itself bore a similar significance. The school of the Porch, which he instituted at Athens, was remarkable for the liberal reception it gave to students from all quarters. It was under the teaching of the Stoics that Athens first became a real university. Hitherto the Grecian student had traversed the world to learn the wisdom

of the foreigner at his own home; thenceforth the foreigners crowded to the centre of Greece to learn of the Greek, but at the same time to impart to the Greek and to one another the learning with which they were themselves imbued. The Stoic was the first cosmopolite. Plato had advanced a step beyond the popular notions of his countrymen in declaring that all Greeks are friends and brothers of the Greeks, and in laying down rules of humanity for their treatment of one another. But he does not extend this consideration beyond the Greeks. The Greeks, he still says, are the natural enemies of the barbarians. He still clings to the ancient idea of the city as the nucleus of society, and takes as his model of a city the most narrow and illiberal of all the Grecian communities, namely, the Spartan. He allows of slavery; but here, too, he is in advance of the common sentiment of his countrymen; for he admits slavery only as a political necessity, and betrays very clearly, by his loose way of discussing it, that he knows not how to fit it logically into his ethical system. Aristotle, on the other hand, not only holds the institution to be necessary, but at the same time resolutely maintains that it is right and proper according to the order of Nature herself. The Greeks generally conceived it to be impossible that the labourer and handicraftsman could take any useful part in political life; but while Xenophon would make an exception to this conclusion in favour of the husbandman, Aristotle sternly excluded him also. This prince of philosophers protested that among the human race beings there must be of an inferior order, destined by nature to illiberal

occupations only. Many persons, he confessed, are actually made slaves who ought not to be such ; but that accident, he contended, did not invalidate the principle that many are and ought to be slaves. Greeks, he held, are naturally masters ; barbarians are naturally slaves.

It was impossible, however, that such desperate reasoning could maintain itself in the face of the broad political unity introduced into the world by Alexander. It may be surmised, indeed, that the manifest failure of the illustrious Aristotle to justify slavery on natural grounds threw discredit on any such attempt subsequently. Accordingly the natural equality of Greek and barbarian, of bond and free, was fully admitted by the Stoics, and was never again controverted as a philosophical dogma. The fact, however, remained as before. Men continued to be bought and sold, and kept in bonds, and deprived of all human rights, as openly as ever. The only difference perhaps was, that they were no longer insulted by the pretence that God and Nature had created them for that end only. The philosophers accepted the fact, just as plainer men did ; and they fell back, we must suppose, when constrained to account to themselves for it, upon the excuse that death or slavery was the common alternative with all conquered enemies, and that men might well be made slaves to save them from slaughter. From the time of Aristotle they seem anxious to avoid the consideration of the problem altogether.

But the grand discovery of the unity of man pointed directly to the unity of God also. Here, too, the

Stoics found the way prepared for them by the effects of the great Macedonian conquest. As long as the Greeks and other peoples regarded themselves each as a distinct and special race, under the protection of their own respective divinities, they took little heed of the divinities to which the others were attached. But as they got to have more dealings in common, and to know each other better, it became impossible to hold them aloof from the spiritual ideas of their neighbours. It may seem a paradox to say that the idea of the unity of God was the direct result of the progress of polytheism ; yet it is probably true that the minds of the most intelligent of the ancients found a refuge in monotheism from the perplexity into which they were thrown by the recognition of the many gods of the many nations which their habits of mutual intercourse forced upon them. Pythagoras, the learned and much-travelled philosopher of the sixth century B.C., may have the credit of being the first of the Greeks to see clearly beyond the old Homeric mythology unto the One God, who comprehends and embraces all spiritual intelligence. Unpopular and even dangerous as such views were, they seem to have been studiously preserved to later generations beneath the veil of the mysteries.

With the progress of reflection this idea of the Divine unity became more commonly accepted. While some schools of thought were beginning to reject God altogether, others were seeking Him beneath the disguise which He had assumed in the hands of Homer and Hesiod. Æschylus, bold and imaginative, indicates plainly such a belief. There can be no doubt

that Socrates accepted this solution of the great spiritual problem, though from his leaning to the aristocratical element in government, which constitutes itself the guardian of the traditional religion, he continued to observe established cults himself, and recommended them to his disciples. His followers, however, soon threw off all pretence of adhering to the national beliefs. The conquests of Alexander, while they equalized the condition of the whole aggregate of races subjected to his rule, equalized no less the claims of all their respective divinities to the common recognition of all. Polytheism became discredited by its own universality. Two opposing forces remained to divide the intellect of the age between them—atheism and monotheism. The one or the other of these was accepted by the multitudes of the thoughtful men who rushed away from the superstitions of the early world. Many there were who openly avowed and preached both the one or the other of these views; but many more still remained who, while they more covertly attached themselves to the theory of negation, still deemed it prudent to hold, at least outwardly, by the old traditions, or shrank, from timidity or more purely reverential motives, from breaking altogether with them. The ignorant and superstitious believers still formed, even in the time of the Stoics and Epicureans, the bulk of mankind. They were conscious of their numbers and strength, and they showed their jealousy of superior intelligence by generally requiring a show, at least, of decorous respect for the objects of their own infatuated devotion. It was in the empire of Alexander, however,

that the doctrines both of Zeno and Epicurus struck their roots. The one was essentially monotheistic, the other atheistic ; and these two conflicting theories divided between them, at the time of the first preaching of the Gospel, the great majority of men of intelligence and reflection. The Epicureans seemed to prevail in numbers and influence during the hey-day of the Roman power and prosperity. The severe lessons of humility which the civil wars enforced upon the recent conquerors of Greece and Asia abated their pretensions. The school of the Stoics rose much higher in favour with the cultured classes of the generation which was born to struggle against more adverse fortune. Augustus found mind and thought at Rome atheistic ; he left it monotheistic.

Such, at least, may be accepted as a broad estimate of the prevalent disposition of the intelligent classes at the centre of empire at the era of our Lord's coming. The emperor himself had held aloof from either theory. He affected to be a plain, practical man, and no ideologue. He thought it, no doubt, more important to keep on good terms with the impulsive, unreflecting masses of his subjects than to curry favour with one school of philosophers, in doing which he would lose the favour of the other. But he was not content to hold a merely negative position in this respect. He deemed it politic to revive the polytheism of his people, possible perhaps to effect such a revival, but certainly politic to attempt, or at least to seem to attempt it. In his own younger days, indeed, he had allowed himself to sport wantonly with

holy things, and, if we may believe the stories of the day, to turn the divinities of Olympus into ridicule among his boon companions ; but as he advanced in years he cast off the slough of his early infidelity : in his manners, as well as in his public measures, he affected the gravest decorum, and he set an example, which was promptly followed by his friends and parasites, of implicit deference equally to all his patrons, to the senate, the people, and the gods of Rome.

With Cicero had terminated the first age of Roman philosophy, which had been, in fact, a mere summary of the theories of the Grecian schools, devoid of any life and character essentially its own. Cicero himself assumes in turn the position of the Stoicks and the Epicureans, and leaves us in doubt to which of them he most inclines. If he holds any definite views himself, they approach nearest to those of the New Academy, which was, in fact, little else than a negation of all positive views whatever. The Romans of his age were for the most part content to listen to the harangues of the various professors of Greek philosophy ; to hold their own conclusions in suspense, while they gave access and a hearing to all. Surely Augustus showed much practical sense in refusing, as we are told, to addict himself to any one of the rival schools which Cicero might have told him could bring him to no definite conclusion on any of the true objects of moral speculation, which might instruct him, indeed, in the history of the human mind, but could assure him of no specific moral or intellectual truth. His business, above all the Romans, was, not to

debate questions of eternal truth, but to sway men's hopes and fears by appeal to their immediate interests, and to inure them to habits of obedience by the discipline of cults and ceremonies. His policy, such as it was, was pregnant with mighty consequences, much more so than he was probably himself aware.

CHAPTER VI.

THE TEACHING OF MORAL PHILOSOPHY UNDER THE
EARLY EMPIRE.

SUCH, we may believe, was the position which Augustus, as a practical statesman, was content to take up, a position of neutrality as regarded the question in debate between the existing schools of Greek philosophy. But, in fact, the closing years of the Republic had witnessed a new development of speculation of an origin and character more truly Roman. The Romans were at this period thoroughly weary of the debates of the Grecian schools. The eloquence of Cicero had thrown a gleam of splendour over their shadowy discussions ; but even Cicero had failed to interest his countrymen in the unpractical and useless subjects of thought to which he had given so large a portion of his own priceless time and attention. The Romans already sighed for something more to the purpose for the conduct of public or private life ; for some philosophy which could be a guide in times of activity and peril, which could teach men how to live and how to die, rather than hold up to them a faint portrait at best of abstract goodness and holiness. At the close of the Republic there was rising into notice a school of such practical instruction, to which we may give the name of the New Stoicism, a school

which may claim both Cato and Brutus among the earliest of its Roman disciples, as men who strove to give a definite aim to the maxims they had imbibed from their Grecian masters. It may be presumed that the New Stoics of the Roman discipline were men who, leaving the teaching of Zeno and Chrysippus, turned back to the elements of Pythagoras himself. In the time of Cicero Pythagoreism was not perhaps preached at all at Rome. The Greeks had almost forgotten it ; to Rome it had hardly penetrated. The gross materialism of the age had turned contemptuously away from the moral doctrines which were founded upon ascetic self-restraint, and eventuated in mystical idealism. But the pride of the Romans was disenchanted on all sides by the progress and the issues of the Civil Wars. All that they had gloried in was turned to their shame ; all they trusted in seemed to break and crumble under them. The commonplaces of modern rhetoric were to them actual realities. Rome could not bear her own bulk ; Rome, they felt and confessed, was torn in pieces by her own conquering passions. They had now to reconstruct their ideas of life and rules of living. They had to look for some principles on which they could rely to support them under disappointment and mortification, to compensate them for the many objects of interest which they found no longer attainable, to reconcile some of them to a private station in place of the brilliant public career to which they had deemed themselves born, to chasten in all the yearnings of ambition, to confine their worldly desires to petty objects, to lead them perhaps to look to other recom-

penses of a more solid and effectual kind to which they had hitherto given little heed. The assurances of a revealed religion were as yet denied them ; but it was in the aspirations of the New Stoicism, even in the idealism of Pythagoras, its remote founder, that they sought with ardour, though with slender hope, for the nearest compensation for such a blessing.

We learn that Augustus, while refusing to subscribe to the tenets of the Porch, the Garden, or the Academy, the three orthodox theories of his day, did not withhold his attention at least from the preachers of the new Stoicism. Areius, Alexander of Ægæ, Athenodorus and Nestor, both of Tarsus, are mentioned among the sages who waited upon him and the empress Livia at their residence on the Palatine, and assumed what we may call the direction of their consciences, giving practical lessons on the control of the passions, and the moderation of desires. These were Greeks ; but the most consummate teacher of this new doctrine among many was a noble Roman, Q. Sextius, who, if he did not call himself a Stoic, deserved to be noted as the founder of the school which did the greatest honour to that name in the following generations. Other Romans succeeded him, and these teachers, though forming themselves on the methods of the Greeks before them, broke away without scruple from the subtle refinements of disputatious verbiage in which their masters were apparently losing themselves. They reanimated the science they had received from their masters with a vigour and vivacity wholly their own ; it is the ardour and eloquence of Sextius that tends to form the

style both of thought and expression by which the greatest of the Roman Stoics is individually distinguished. Seneca particularizes this teacher as the one to whom he owed more of his own philosophy than to any other.

It may give some idea of the activity and influence of this school if we refer to the names of its professors, which, indeed, are almost all that is left us of them. The elder Sextius, who had flourished in the time of Cicero, was succeeded by his son, whom Seneca praises for the constancy with which he inculcated the leading dogma of the later Stoics, that the truly virtuous man is himself divine, and that Jupiter is only superior to him inasmuch as Jupiter's excellence is not limited in time. Here we have the highest heathen encouragement to virtue, to become like the deity. From this source there flows a copious stream of exhortation to all practical virtues, to fortitude, justice, temperance, and frugality. The teaching of Sextius seems, as it were, to foreshadow the tone of Christian pulpit oratory. This system of emphatic moral direction, which became established by the school of the later Stoics, was illustrated in the hands of the practical Roman masters by constant reference to actual examples. The history of Rome itself was the ready storehouse from which they drew their examples of morality ; and their language was diversified by repeated allusions to the familiar subjects of Roman law and Roman warfare. When we read in St. Paul's Epistle to the Ephesians such sentences as these, "Take unto you the whole armour of God, that ye may be able to withstand in the evil day ;

. . . . Having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness," &c.¹ and remember that it was written from Rome, we may trace in the metaphor a reference to such a passage as that which Seneca cites from one of the Sextii, which took rank doubtless among the common-places of Stoic prediction : " An army marches in battle array, prepared for combat at whichever side an enemy may appear. So should the wise man prepare himself. He should draw forth all his virtues in every direction, so that his forces may be ready at all points, and answer to the word of command. . . . The wise man, sustained and vigilant, will not retreat in the face of poverty, of sorrow, of ignominy or pain. He will advance fearlessly against them all, he will hold on his way confidently amidst them."

Among the disciples of Sextius we hear of a Cornelius Celsus, a Crassitius, a Fabianus, whose names indicate that they were probably Romans ; though Sextius, at least, wrote, as we are informed, in Greek. To these were attached others who were doubtless Greeks by origin, Sotion the preceptor of Seneca, Metronax, and Attalus, all of whom are individually distinguished by some trait of personal teaching or character. We may say of them generally that the main object of their teaching was morality and the rules of virtuous living, though they did not abstain altogether from speculation either in physics or metaphysics. But, above all things, they enjoined self-examination and the education of the conscience. It is herein that

¹ *Ephes. vi. 13.*

we see the great advance philosophy had made from the time of Cicero, and still more it may be presumed, from the time of Epicurus and Zeno. It was in order to cultivate this habit of strict moral training, and render the heart more susceptible to moral influences, that the new school recurred more urgently to the doctrine of Pythagoras, which taught men to purify their affections by abstaining from their coarse indulgence in animal food. Seneca has told us how he was persuaded in his youth, under the guidance of his Stoical masters, to renounce the use of meat altogether. "Excited by their discourses," he says, "I commenced the practice of such abstinence in a moment of enthusiasm. At the end of a year habit had made it easy and even agreeable. I was convinced that my spiritual nature acquired greater vigour and activity; and now, after I have long given up this discipline, I am still inclined to believe it was so. Why did I then renounce it?" he continued, "because, when the philosophers were banished from Rome under Tiberius, this abstinence being one of the marks of their teaching, my father entreated me, from motives of prudence, to relinquish a practice which might bring me under suspicion of being one of their party myself. So it was that I returned to my former mode of living; and I confess that I found no difficulty in resuming the use of better cheer."¹

This translation is slightly paraphrased; but it seems to preserve the writer's real meaning, for he intimates that the foreign rites which Tiberius pro-

¹ Senec. *Epist.*, 108.

scribed, namely, the Jewish and the Egyptian, as Tacitus more particularly specifies them, were connected in the minds of the Romans with the dogmas respecting abstinence which were taught by the philosophers of the day. This connection is important; for it shows that the moral teaching of the schools was grounded, to a great extent, upon practical observances. No doubt the religious usages of the Jews and the Egyptians, even in the city, as far as they related to the use or prohibition of particular viands, were harmless in themselves, and it is difficult to perceive in what way they could have attracted the jealous attention of the Government. It was only in their connection with the moral teaching of the prevailing schools of thought that they might assume an appearance of hostility to the existing polity. But the imperial despotism looked askance at all freedom of thought, especially of thought which arrayed itself in opposition to it, and engaged its votaries to murmur at it, to thwart it, or at best to withdraw from all active adherence to it. The disciples of the teachers of the day showed themselves adverse to the imperial interests in all these ways. If they dared not act or speak against them, they were known, at least, to talk privately in disparagement of them, to busy themselves in the composition of histories or pamphlets to be read, as they would sometimes say, after their own deaths, when their sentiments would exercise a mischievous effect on the next generation. As yet, however, in the reign of Tiberius, and indeed of his next successors, this hostile tendency was more or less

disguised, and offered no reasonable excuse to the Government for overt measures of repression. The emperor was unwilling, almost nervously unwilling, to break with the thinking men of his day. He knew well that his system could not please them ; he despaired, for the most part, of conciliating them ; but he would not, perhaps he dared not, prosecute them. They were still a power in the State. The class to which they belonged still preserved the show at least of acquiescence ; and it was only by stealth, by covert and oblique methods, that he strove to check them, and defend himself against them. In the reign of Tiberius it was premature, as it would seem, to banish the preachers and teachers from Rome. The successor of Augustus was satisfied with aiming an indirect blow against them by denouncing the foreign superstitions from which they were known to derive one main support of the moral discipline which rendered them so independent of the flatteries and enticements of power. The brave and patient spirits who fortified their moral courage by hard and frugal living were not the men to cringe to their rulers either for fear or favour. But there were many who, like the elder Seneca, were wise in their generation, and urged their sons to refrain from practices which might bring them under suspicion ; who took the action of the Government as a mild hint which it was imprudent to disregard, while it was still too distant and oblique to be resented. This, no doubt, was the real object of the decree of Tiberius. As against the Jews there might have been further motives of jealousy ; but we are unable to conceive any adequate cause of appre-

hension with regard to the devotees of Isis and Anubis, however much the old-fashioned worshippers of the Olympian divinities might affect to be hurt and scandalized at their vulgar and vicious propensities.

The teachers of philosophy bowed to the storm, and while it fell to some extent, though still not very generally, upon the obscure foreign brood specified in the decree, they succeeded personally in evading it by the exercise of ordinary caution. The philosophers continued to haunt the chambers of the men of letters and the men of public affairs. They continued to converse with them in private, to impart to them the lessons of their reputed wisdom, to advise them in their moral difficulties, to console them in their sorrows, to attend them at all seasons of domestic interest, and suggest to them on their death-beds the last consolations of a resigned or a self-applauding spirit. The men, and still more the women, derived a comfort with which at last they could hardly allow themselves to dispense, from the constant and tender attention of these domestic confessors. That in many, and, perhaps, in most cases, such spiritual assistance weakened rather than strengthened the moral fibre, we may well suppose; nevertheless, we may allow ourselves to hope that it often availed to guard men from the evil associations which beset them on all sides, and raised the general tone of practical morality among them. The histories of the time reveal to us some few noble examples of virtue among the men, such as those of an Agricola and a Thrasea; and the improved tone we meet with in the intercourse of the sexes, and in the estimate formed by the

Romans of their wives and daughters, seems to evince a genuine advance in the graces of domestic life.

The Apostle himself, who draws with firm unshrinking hand his frightful portrait of Roman wickedness, has still a word of consideration for the Gentiles, who, having not the law of God made known to them, yet do by nature the things contained in the law ; these, he repeats, “having not the law are a law unto themselves, which show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and their thoughts the meanwhile accusing or else excusing one another, in the day when God shall judge the secrets of men by Jesus Christ.”¹ This may be taken as a description of the choicest members of Roman society, who, at this period, and under the teaching now described, were dubiously feeling their way to the more perfect law which was about to be revealed to them. The revival even of external religion under Augustus was not wholly formal. It certainly assisted in opening men’s minds to the moral teachings of an advanced philosophy, and thus prepared the way for the better teaching of the Gospel.

Of all this active and extensive school of thought, there remain the actual writings, or a portion of the writings, of one master only,—namely, of Seneca, surnamed “the philosopher.” The father, indeed, of this illustrious sage, who is distinguished from him by the title of “the rhetorician,” has left us some fragmentary references to its leading teachers, and to the character of their teaching ; but from the remains of his son we may collect

¹ *Romans* ii. 13-15.

not only some further direct account of the teachers themselves, but indirectly of the doctrines which they taught. For the younger Seneca represents to us the doctrine of the new Stoics completed, and, to some extent, reduced to system. In his works we may look for the vein of thought which had glimmered through the previous century, and which in him, and in him only, is fully brought to light. We must not regard Seneca, as we might easily be tempted to do, and as has been too commonly done, as a single independent thinker, standing out from his age, and from the age before him, original and self-evolved. He is rather the natural product of the age, which was itself moulded by a series of thinkers and writers, and we know not by what chance he has alone survived. No doubt the place he filled in public life gave him prominence above others; but we are by no means certain that his place as a philosophic teacher is really higher than that of Sextius or of Attalus. It is more probable that his writings have so far escaped the oblivion which has overwhelmed the others from the interest they have had in the eyes of some Christian theologians, who have seemed to recognise in them a germ of Christian, and especially of Pauline dogma. It was felt to be specially important to preserve the works of a contemporary philosopher for comparison with the teaching of the Apostle himself.

L. Annæus Seneca was born in Spain A.D. 3, a date which coincides, perhaps, exactly with the birth of St. Paul. He was brought to the great city in his early youth, and there received his education under the care of a father who had attained distinction as a

teacher of rhetoric, and he was subjected, no doubt, to all the best influences of the people around him. He was, to the last, a representative of Rome and the Romans, rather than of his native province. The cultivation of eloquence was the main object of his intellectual training, and the eloquence of the day, deprived of its genuine aims, the maintenance of public rights and the assertion of equal laws, had become little better than a play of words, abounding in epigrammatic point, in incisive language, and startling antithesis. In matter it was jejune and barren; every rhetorician stored his memory with the figures he had learnt from his master or from his own fellow-students. It is curious to trace in some instances which have been preserved to us, how a flower of language might be borrowed and handed on from one vapid disclaimer to another. The eloquence of the imperial bar had almost run its course of life and genuine invention, and was touching on its decline, when Seneca gave it its last onward impulse. Quintilian signalizes its decay in the next generation; and the younger Pliny, but a few years later, illustrates its fall in his own person. Unfavourable as was the age to progress in the direction of eloquence, it was not less so to the development of thought in the realm of ethical speculation. The condition of society did, however, allow some play for improvement in moral conduct. The height to which the appliances of easy and luxurious living had advanced, seemed to call aloud for the exercise of effectual repression. The wealth of the few contrasted too painfully with the squalid poverty of the many.

Crying was the need for self-control, for the cultivation of contentment, for recommending the graces of humility, fortitude, and temperance in all things. It may be admitted that Seneca, in applying his philosophy, for the most part, to the inculcation of these moral duties, made some advance upon the more abstract teaching even of his own masters ; there can be no doubt that his teaching stood in sharper contrast with the fashions of his degenerate age than that of the ages before him. As the general tone of society under Claudius and Nero was apparently more corrupt than under Augustus, so the preaching of Seneca was, we may believe, more earnest, more keen, more startling in its application to the conscience of his hearers than that of Sextius and his more immediate followers.

Plato and Aristotle had taught men their duties to the State. After the fall of Grecian freedom the Stoics and Epicureans taught men their duties to themselves and to one another. While Rome remained a free State this latter teaching continued subordinate to the other. Cicero still devotes himself chiefly to illustrating the duties of men as citizens. It was the new Stoics, under the empire, who finally absolved their pupils from all inquiry into public obligations. Seneca hardly refers to any such at all ; still less, it may be said, do Persius and Juvenal, Dion Chrysostom and Plutarch. The topics of Seneca's formal discourses, of such personal and private application, are sufficiently indicated by their titles. He writes on Anger, on Constancy, on the Shortness of Life, on Benefits, on Clemency, on Tranquillity of Mind, and

such like themes. He addresses "Consolations" to his friends, or the loss of their relatives. The series of "Letters" with which he forms the mind of his friend Lucilius to philosophy, turn very generally upon these and similar topics ; and of all these there is none more practical than the direction he gives for preparation for death ; for death sudden, violent, unmerited, was a subject of constant contemplation in the society to which the friendly preacher addressed himself. The principles which Seneca enforces bear throughout a high and noble character. There is nothing sordid or selfish in his prudential maxims ; his courage, his honesty, his generosity, betray every mark of sincere feeling. Though his style is unfortunately disfigured by far-fetched point and laboured antithesis, though his own personal conduct fell sometimes far below the level of his moral rules, there is no hollow exaggeration, no empty declamation in the precepts he inculcates. There is one great lacuna, indeed, in the circle of duties he prescribes ; he has no room in his system as a genuine Stoic for the sentiment of pity. Again, there is, at least, one false view on which his system compels him to insist ; the Stoic, having no notion of a duty to his God, can recognise no obligation to bear the ills which Providence inflicts upon him ; and when the circumstances of his condition seem to preclude the further exercise of his own volition, he has no resource but to die, no duty left him but to put an end to his own baffled existence.

For the fatal defect of the Stoic morality was after all that it rested upon no sanction ; there

was nothing to bind it together ; it was “sand without lime.” It acknowledged, indeed, the being of God in words, and it could speak very pertinently and even warmly of the relations of God to man, as the common Father of all, of the duty of man to imitate His holiness, of the love of God for all His children, of His fatherly discipline and correction. Seneca speaks very pointedly on all these subjects ; he expatiates on the communion between God and man, on the divine Spirit which takes up its abode in the human heart, and the constraining influence it exerts upon it. He acknowledges the heinousness of sin, and the burden it imposes upon us. He declares that life must be a perpetual warfare against sin ; he proclaims that sin is universal, that no man is free from it, no man can wholly escape from it. He points to the stings of conscience as its appointed, and, as he would hope, its inevitable punishment. He allows, as has been said, that there is a divine Providence which watches over men and things, and orders mundane affairs more or less completely and stringently. Yet upon this cardinal subject his views are painfully indistinct and fluctuating. Between Providence and Fate he is continually oscillating. If the divine government seems to him at one time intelligent and full of purpose, at another it relapses into a blind impulse, directed by an external necessity. At such times the Deity himself, the object of adoration and honour, ceases to be a personal existence, and is resolved into the external universe. The idea of a future life, as it presents itself to the mind of Seneca, fluctuates in the same manner. It is to be absorbed

in the universal spirit ; at best, it is the lot of a few choice individual spirits only ; it is subject to no law of moral retribution ; it becomes a painless, passionless, mechanical existence ; it shall continue, indeed, as long as the world itself continues, but that, too, is only for an appointed period ; the time shall come when everything, both matter and spirit, shall be consumed in a universal conflagration. It appears, then, that man in this world is wholly independent of God ; he cannot look to Him for assistance, direction, or protection ; God has done nothing for him, and he is not bound to repay obedience where no moral support has been reciprocally given. His duties, in short, are prescribed to him, not by God, but by his own conscience ; the good man fulfils the law of his own being, not the law of God. He has no rule of life external to himself ; no sanction for his actions ; no assurance of their rectitude, except his own inconstant imagination.

If the system of Sextius and Seneca was thus preached in its logical results, it could not fail to betray its hollowness. But it was the character of the masters of the sect to play with the outer lines of their great subject rather than to penetrate to its core. They could not but feel that their footing was insecure, nor fail to recognise the inconsistencies in which they involved themselves. Again and again they drew back from the edge of the slough of uncertainty in which another step in speculation would have irretrievably plunged them. They were perhaps only half conscious of the falseness of their position ; yet we can hardly fail to detect the artifice with which

Seneca often escapes from an untenable point under a shower of his most brilliant fireworks.

The account thus submitted to the reader may help in giving him a general view of the moral teaching of the heathens at Rome at the period of the Apostle's visit. To what extent this teaching prevailed among the various classes of society must be a matter of conjecture only. We know but too well from various sources that the corruption of the age was deep and widely diffused, and to this fact St. Paul himself has given his attestation conclusively. Such, as he assures us, are the universal and inevitable effects of Pagan blindness or superstition. But enough has been said to show that there were still some elements of good feeling, some virtuous aspirations, among certain classes, even at the capital of the Pagan world, and that some advance had been recently made by them. We have now to see what opportunity was given to the Apostle to build upon this foundation, and to trace, as far as we can, the incidence and effect of the appeal he personally made to it.

CHAPTER VII.

ST. PAUL'S INTERCOURSE AT ROME WITH THE DISCIPLES AND "THEM OF CÆSAR'S HOUSEHOLD."—ST. PAUL AND SENECA.

THE last chapter of the "Acts of the Apostles" has brought St. Paul to Rome, and its concluding paragraph informs us that he "dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence (or freedom of speech), no man forbidding (or hindering) him."¹ As no mention is made either of the Apostle being brought up for trial, or of his liberation, we may conclude, in accordance with the tradition of the Church, that he was still kept in custody during that period as a prisoner awaiting the hearing of his case; but the statement of St. Luke plainly implies that no harshness was used towards him, and that he enjoyed all the indulgence which, as a prisoner, could reasonably be granted him. He was, indeed, a prisoner of some note; as a provincial, the central Government would, we may imagine, be even more lenient to him than to a Roman resident, who might be an object of greater suspicion and distrust; the account which would be given of him by the authorities before whom he had been brought in Palestine would be favourable

¹ *Acts xxviii. 30, 31.*

rather than the reverse. "This man," Festus and Agrippa had said, when conferring privately together, "doeth nothing worthy of death or of bonds." Had he not appealed to Cæsar, and desired to be sent to Rome, he would have been let go free. His judges at Cæsarea were not sorry to be rid of him ; but there is no reason to suppose that they would say anything to his prejudice. What causes may have delayed the hearing of his cause at Rome hardly admit of conjecture. It is easy to surmise that the jealousy of the national party among the Jews at the capital may have operated to his prejudice. It is possible that the empress Poppæa, just married and at the height of her power, may have humoured and supported a sect which she is supposed to have held in favour. Two cases have been cited from the histories of Josephus in which she seems to have thus exerted herself in its behalf, and it is possible that, like some other Roman matrons, she may have addicted herself to Jewish usages.¹ We cannot suppose that Nero, idle and dissolute as he was, would care personally to exert himself in the interests of mere justice. Possibly, also, the documents to be obtained, and the depositions to be taken at so great a distance, involved a delay of indefinite duration. Possibly the Apostle was wholly overlooked among the number of appeals which were constantly soliciting the emperor's attention. However this may be, Paul continued, to all appearance, for the space at least of two years, still untried, and still in custody. We are anxious to ascertain any

¹ Joseph., *Antiq.*, xx. 1, 11; *Vit.*, 3.

particulars that can be gathered of a sojourn which must surely have been exceedingly important for the propagation of the faith, but of which no more is recorded than the few words of Holy Writ above cited, and upon which tradition itself is singularly silent.

One or two collateral intimations only, and these too of the slightest kind, and liable to some variety of interpretation, can be gathered from other passages in Scripture.

It was during the interval of this detention for instance that certain of St. Paul's epistles seem clearly to have been written. Such are the epistles, taking them in their order of time as generally reputed, addressed to Philemon, to the Colossians, to the Ephesians, and to the Philippians.

Now, in the first chapter to the Philippians we meet with the words, "So that my bonds in Christ are manifest in all the palace, and in all other *places*."¹ Such, at least, is the rendering of our Authorized Version; but a question arises as to the exact meaning of the Greek word *πραιτώριον*, which is here rendered "palace," and in the latter clause the italicized word "places" is an insertion to complete the supposed sense.

Upon this it is first to be observed that the word *πραιτώριον* occurs in four of the historical books of the New Testament, and is applied in all these cases either generally to the residence of the king or governor of the country, or, more definitely, to the judgment-hall in

¹ *Phil.* i. 13.

which he presided within it. The term is derived from the prætor's or commander's tent in the Roman army, which he moved from camp to camp during his operations of war, but which became his fixed seat of authority as a military governor, when his conquest was peaceably settled. The provincials recognised in this commander their civil ruler, and the term in question, which was properly no more than a technical military designation, became with them the equivalent for what we should call the Residence, Government-house, or Palace. Such we find to be the uniform application of the word in the writings of the Greek and other Eastern provincials. One exception only has been adduced where an obscure Greek writer of the third century, baldly translating a Latin document, gives the word a somewhat different sense, but one which is not uncommon in the earlier usage of the Romans themselves.¹ For in Latin the word prætorium is found in two significations. The first, which seems to be the primary one, is the same as the Greek equivalent; though, by a poetical or historical flourish, the plural, "præatoria," is used more frequently for "a palace," while the singular, "prætorium," is generally appropriated to a "military tent." But the word means also the body-guard or official retinue of the commander, and becomes extended accordingly to the whole of that large division of the Roman forces which protected the person of the emperor, and constituted the permanent garrison of the city. "Præ-

¹ Dositheus, *Hadrian, Sentent.*, 2 (being a number of extracts from the legal decisions of the emperor Hadrian), cited by Prof. Lightfoot, *Comm. on the Philippians*, p. 100.

torium" in this extended sense, becomes equivalent to "prætoriani"; and it may be contended that the Apostle's phrase, "known in the whole prætorium," means, not the palace, nor even the actual locality of the prætorian camp, but the men and officers who formed the corps, 20,000 strong, of the prætorian cohorts. Such a term, it might be said, would be understood by all intelligent citizens as a technical and constitutional designation of the prætorian guard.

But the emperor had his own residence in the imperial palace on the Palatine Hill. In the time of Nero a full half of the area of this hill was occupied by the buildings of this vast and multifarious edifice. He continued to extend it on all sides. Besides the chambers which he would retain for his own private use, and the numerous halls, corridors, baths, and temples which it would comprise within its precincts, accommodation would be provided for hundreds, or even for thousands, of clients and retainers, such as thronged the "insulæ," or cubicles which leant against its walls; there would be space allotted for the barracks of the body-guard which kept watch in turn over the emperor's person; there would doubtless be chambers or houses assigned to individuals who came to him on appeals, in which they might be left altogether at large, or strictly confined, or kept again in hired lodgings, as a matter of favour. Under the Republic it had been usual to place arrested criminals in the custody of persons of note in the city. In the same way we cannot doubt but that the emperors, ever studious of maintaining the old traditions, made themselves the guardians, in the

interest of the State, of many who were sent to them under arrest from the provinces. Accordingly, if we take *πραιτώριον* to mean the imperial Residence, we may suppose Paul to have been thus kept in charge, though lodged at his own cost, in the immediate custody of the guard which kept watch around the palace. This is, on the whole, a safer interpretation than to apply the word to the prætorian camp, for which there seems to be no authority in Greek usage, nor, perhaps, in Latin; for surely the camp of the prætorians would rather be known as the *castra prætoriana*. Again, it is little likely that a Greek or Eastern provincial should know the exact technical sense which may also be given to the Latin “prætorium”; he would be more apt to use it, as it was used to his own knowledge, of the Residence of an Agrippa or a Herod. Paul himself, though formally enrolled, among the citizens, was a provincial, destitute perhaps even of a knowledge of the Latin language; devoid almost certainly of a knowledge of a local Roman usage of which the provinces had no cognisance. Even if we allow that the Latin word would be most properly applied, at Rome and by the Romans themselves, to the personnel of the imperial retinue, we should bear in mind that the word here before us is a Greek and not a Latin one, and is used by a foreigner such as Luke, writing of a foreigner such as Paul, for foreigners acquainted with provincial rather than Roman usage.¹ There is no doubt that the Greek

¹ When Josephus has to speak of the imperial body-guard, he calls it, not *τὸ πραιτώριον*, but *τὸ στρατηγικὸν καλούμενον*. This passage (*Antiq.*, xix. 3, 1) is also cited by Professor

word, *πραιτώριον*, wherever it occurs elsewhere, except once in what seems to be a servile reproduction of a Latin law phrase, means a palace, or a chamber in a palace, and nothing else.

We may admit, indeed, that there is some difficulty in this version arising from the clause which follows, “and in all other,” or perhaps more correctly, “among all other.” It may seem more natural to complete the sentence with “people” than with “places.” But, on the other hand, the accredited rendering “palace” is rather strongly supported by the passage at the close of the same epistle (iv. 22); “All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cæsar’s household.” For this seems clearly to indicate a close connection between the Apostle and the inmates of the palace itself, as if he had actually resided among them, and had been enabled to address his preaching directly to them without interference. The household of the emperor consisted, we may suppose, mainly of the troop of slaves who ministered to his wants and caprices as the wealthiest and most luxurious of the Roman magnates. But senators and knights were also in close attendance upon him, equally in his hours of business and of relaxation. These, indeed, were all probably masters of households of their own; thus Seneca, the most intimate of his ministers, enjoyed a private residence in his own ‘gardens’; Burrus, the prefect of the Prætorians, whose duty brought him, no doubt, daily into the Lightfoot. It seems to show pretty strongly that *πραιτώριον* was not known in the sense of “body-guard” to Greek writers or readers.

imperial presence, occupied his own lodging in the Prætorian camp. The affairs of government were transacted at this time chiefly through the instrumentality of the emperor's freedmen, some of them notorious in history for their riches and influence, court favourites whom he had himself enfranchised, or who had been enfranchised by his predecessors, and had succeeded to his own favour and confidence. These also had each his own palace and gardens, in which he vied with the proudest of the ancient aristocracy. Nevertheless, these too were so closely attached to the emperor's person that they might claim to form a part of Cæsar's household ; and it is quite possible that if Paul was kept in lax custody within the precincts of the palace, any one of these may have come in contact with him, and have listened, if he pleased, to the words which the apostle was eager to address to him. A man of Paul's power of thought and language, speaking with the academic tone of a scholar of Tarsus, and with the natural fervour of a Hebrew prophet, could hardly fail to command the attention of the feverish students of moral truth who abounded, as we have seen, even in the ranks of the Roman aristocracy. But if such men as these turned away from him, he could not fail to be better received among the lower class of the emperor's household attendants, both male and female, who filled a thousand menial offices about his person, and that of his consort. The ministers to the luxury of Poppæa were certainly not less numerous than those who discharged similar functions for the ease and gratification of Livia before her. But the columbarium of the

former empress, discovered in the last century, containing the urns of numbers of her “family,” reveals to us the names of the various offices which her slaves or freedwomen filled. Among them are servants of the chamber and the antechamber, servants who waited at the doors, who attended at the bath, who assisted at the toilet, who kept the trinkets and jewels, who read at the empress’s couch, who sat at her feet, who followed her in her walks, who lulled her to sleep and watched over her slumbers, who had charge of her privy purse, and distributed the tasks of the whole household. The persons in waiting upon the emperor himself were probably even more multitudinous, and their functions were not less minutely discriminated. While these functions were, in a great many cases, merely manual, and imply no special breeding or education ; there were not a few of the household intrusted with affairs requiring high intellectual training. The emperor was surrounded with numerous members of the learned classes, such as could discharge the duties of secretaries, of physicians, of professors of every art and accomplishment, and such as pretended, at least, to be teachers of philosophy. To have access to the household of Cæsar was to be put in communication with divers of the most intelligent people of the day, even if they ascended no higher in the scale of society than those who ministered to Cæsar’s personal comforts and recreations.

But what opportunities of this kind were actually allowed to the prisoner of the Gospel, we cannot specifically say. Over Paul’s intercourse with “those of Cæsar’s household,” a cloud rests which we can

never hope to penetrate. It so happens, indeed, that recent excavations have discovered more of the ancient columbaria, and revealed to us the actual names of various persons, who seem to have been connected as slaves or freedmen with the emperor Claudius, or his consorts, Messalina and Agrippina, and others of the imperial family. It is deeply interesting to meet among these appellatives with not a few that are identical with those of persons whom the Apostle mentions in his Epistle to the Romans. If these are, indeed, the very individuals to whom he sends his salutations, we are authorized to conclude that the faith, as known at Rome before his own arrival there, had already made its way within the precincts of the palace itself. The Gospel was already heard among them that were of Cæsar's household. So it is that we find among these names an Amplias, an Urbanus, a Stachys, an Apella, a Tryphæna, and a Tryphosa, a Rufus, a Hermas, a Patrobius, which is probably the same name as Patrobas, a Philologus, and a Nereus. Some of these, no doubt, are very common appellatives; but the occurrence of so many coincidences can hardly be accidental. Though none of them, except, perhaps, Apella, can be considered as a Jewish name, yet as the practice among the Jews of assuming Gentile appellatives was exceedingly common, it is quite possible that many of these people were of Hebrew origin. The "household" of Aristobulus, if he was actually the grandson so named of Herod the Great, then resident at Rome, would naturally be, to a great extent, of the same race, and thus we may easily account for the introduction into it of Christian disciples; but

every great man at Rome had probably some dependents of Jewish nationality, who were not inferior to the Greeks in suppleness of character, or often in intellectual accomplishments, so that we may well believe that in the imperial household also some Christian disciples, some learners, some aspirants and candidates for conversion, had obtained a footing from the time of the first diffusion of the Gospel among their countrymen in the city.

We may further observe that the easy and familiar way in which the Apostle introduces the mention of this greeting to the disciples at Philippi, "All the saints salute you, chiefly they that are of Cæsar's household," seems to imply that he, too, stood on an easy footing with the inmates of their class in the palace, as well as in other houses of the great. It is surely the style of one who went in and out among them, one at least to whom they frequently and readily resorted. It is the style of a man who dwelt close at hand, accessible daily as they passed by on their ordinary avocations, not of one who, though in a lodging of his own hiring, was yet confined within the walls of the camp of the Prætorians. He received all who came to him, and conversed freely with them, no man forbidding him, not the officer of the daily guard at the palace-gate, not the sentry who kept watch over him, if such a sentry was still attached to him by a chain, which, however, it is not necessary to suppose. Surely many Jews, and following in their footsteps many Greeks and Romans, women as well as men, would naturally seek out the eloquent Apostle among the various domiciles of the court and palace, who would not have

ventured to inquire for him in the rude quarters of a military fastness. The notice of "Cæsar's household" seems to deserve great weight in determining a question already so nearly balanced as the meaning of *πραιτώριον* in the mouth of a foreigner writing Greek for the Greeks.

But if the Apostle was thus free to receive the visits of the inmates of the imperial residence, and was actually sought out by many, not Jews only, but Greeks and Romans also, can we suppose that, with such a message as he had to deliver, and with such power given him to deliver it, he failed to attract the notice of persons of higher mark, social and political, than the humble attendants on the emperor or his consort? Must we acknowledge that we are not sufficiently acquainted with the social habits and etiquette of the day to speak on this point with confidence? If, indeed, we could find any trace of such communication between Paul and any one of the noted personages of the day, the question would be answered. If we could detect his thoughts and language in the recorded sayings of any such character, we might naturally infer such communication. This is the point to which the attention of many inquirers has been directed, and accordingly a brief reference to this inquiry will find a fitting place in these pages.

What, we would ask, in the first place, was the doctrine which we may suppose St. Paul to have preached to the inmates of Cæsar's household, such as we have described them, and more particularly to the accomplished heathens, Greek or Roman, such as Seneca himself, on the supposition that Seneca was one of

those who attended on his teaching, or paid, at least, some casual visits to him, or hearkened more or less curiously when he came himself among them? When St. Peter addressed the "men of Judæa" on the day of Pentecost, and made to them his first public proclamation of the Gospel, he spoke of Jesus of Nazareth as "a man approved of God among you, by miracles, wonders, and signs, which God did in the midst of you," of whom David had before spoken in the spirit of prophecy, declaring that "the Lord said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand until I make thy foes thy footstool." And "therefore," he added, "let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God hath made that same Jesus whom ye have crucified both Lord and Christ." This proclamation was made to the "house of Israel," and, accordingly, it referred directly to the witness of the people of Judæa to the works of Jesus, and to the well-known prophecies concerning Him, both of which might be expected to assure the intelligent Jew that Jesus was the Christ. So, again, when St. Paul "answered for himself" before king Agrippa, a man of Jewish birth and breeding, he addressed him as himself a Jew, and one expert in all customs and questions among his own people; and, accordingly, to him he declares the cardinal doctrines of Jesus Christ's personality, of his miraculous power on earth, of his glory in heaven, and, further, of the authority given to his Apostle to open the eyes of the Gentiles, and to turn them, together with the Jews, from darkness to light, from the power of Satan unto God. He refers his Jewish auditor to Moses and the prophets in attestation of

the Messiahship of the Lord Jesus, of his promised resurrection now accomplished, and of the salvation of the world through Him. Such is the tenor of St. Paul's preaching to a Jewish hearer. It is needless to say that such are not the topics which we should expect him to bring to the notice of a Roman philosopher. That there should be no trace in Seneca's writings of an acquaintance with these topics cannot be adduced in evidence against the supposition, on whatever else it may be grounded, that he was actually acquainted with the Apostle, and imbibed some Christian principles from intercourse with him.

When, however, he turns to the heathen people of Athens, the Jewish preacher naturally omits all reference to the promised Messiah of the Jews, and to the tokens of miracle and prophecy by which he was to be made known to them. He insists only upon the two great points of Christian teaching in which the whole Gentile world, together with the Jew, could feel one common interest.

"God," he declares, "that made the world . . . dwelleth not in temples made with hands . . . and hath made of one blood all nations of men." He "is not far from every one of us. For in Him we live and move, and have our being; as certain of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring." And now, he adds, God "commandeth every one to repent" of his mistaken views of Him hitherto, and their evil consequences, "because He hath appointed a day in which He will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom He hath ordained, whereof He hath given assurance unto all men, in that He hath

raised Him from the dead."¹ At this point the discourse was apparently interrupted; we may well believe, indeed, that we have received no more than a brief summary of its actual substance; nevertheless, we may fairly refer to it as indicating the main line of argument which the Apostle would adopt with the heathen as distinguished from the Jewish auditor. The topics he here advances are plainly these: the unity of God, as opposed to the popular polytheism; the spiritual nature of the Godhead, as opposed to idolatry; the revealed truth that God is the Creator of the world, and the common Father of all mankind as one brotherhood, living under one common law of righteousness, as opposed to national and anti-social prejudices; that all men have sinned, and are required to repent, under pain of judgment after death, by One who has appeared personally upon earth, and Whom God himself has raised from the dead. We may suppose that the Apostle further insisted upon the resurrection of Christ as a pledge of the future resurrection of all mankind for the judgment appointed them.

If such were the cardinal points of St. Paul's preaching to the "men of letters," including, among them, "certain philosophers of the Epicureans and Stoics," such, also, we may infer, would be precisely the points which he would bring most plainly before a heathen of Cæsar's household, whether he were the humble slave of foreign extraction, and of the least cultivated intelligence, or the wisest of the wise among them, a Roman minister of state, a tutor of Roman princes.

¹ Acts xvii.

Such, then, was the language which, if Seneca conferred with Paul, Paul assuredly held to Seneca. If Seneca learnt any Christian principles from the Apostle, such as these are the principles which we shall most surely find reflected in his writings. Let us now turn to the remains of the philosopher's own teaching, and refer to some of the extracts that have been so copiously made from them, which may be thought to bear upon this point, and see what conclusion they may lead us to.

i. As regards the being and nature of the Deity, Seneca nowhere draws out his views distinctly. It is only in casual references that he not unfrequently speaks of God in the singular number as if he were one only. It is, however, not less common with him to speak of Gods in the plural, as if they were many. "God," he says, "hath no need of servants or ministers;" "God is near us, nay, He is in us;" but, on the other hand, "The first of all worship of the Gods is to believe in the Gods;" "We worship them enough if we believe in them." No doubt the common rhetorical language of the day allows of either the one phrase or the other, and Seneca's actual belief as to the unity of God cannot be decided from instances such as these. They may suffice to assure us, at least, that he gave no countenance to the vulgar mythology. If he uses sometimes the concrete "Jupiter" for the abstract divinity, it is not to be supposed that he holds by the personal existence of a king and father of the Gods, the husband of Juno, the parent of Apollo; rather he would have us infer that the divine being, or divine principle, to which he gives the popular appellation, is really one, and one

only. This is the creed he would insinuate without directly stating it. But, if this is a Christian principle, no less is it the principle of many of the philosophers of earlier ages, from Pythagoras to Cicero. Seneca assuredly did not learn it from the Apostle. He had been made familiar with it by one heathen master after another. The Roman sage gives us, however, some further idea of the nature of this divinity. He regards Him as a spiritual influence rather than a spiritual existence. He confines Him to no fixed locality. He despairs the vulgar superstition of ascribing to Him a corporeal being, or a human form. He declares that the true figure of the Deity cannot be represented by a material image of gold or silver; nor does He require to be worshipped in a temple of stone, nor appeased by the sacrifice of victims. He affirms that a sacred or divine spirit inhabits the breast of every good man; but to this spirit he ascribes no personality. God, in his view, is coextensive with the world, and informs or animates the whole. His Monotheism is, in fact, Pantheism, in which God and man are confounded together, and not less so God and nature. His God becomes a mere abstract idea, and is easily, perhaps necessarily, resolved into Fate. As regards the Fate which is thus identified with Deity, the philosopher cannot for a moment retain a distinct conception of it. The question ever recurs with him, and presents no foothold for him, whether it is conscious or unconscious, whether it is Providence or Necessity, whether God, in short, controls it, or it controls God. Either view is presented to us from time to time, and seems

to occupy the teacher's field of vision. Seneca does, indeed, profess a belief in a divine Providence, and has written a special treatise upon the subject; but his casual sayings are constantly found at variance with any such fixed belief, and leave us with the full impression, that he, like many of the philosophers before him, vacillated between the one conception and the other. The Christian belief, on the contrary, is fixed and definite; if Seneca had learnt anything from St. Paul, or listened to him for a moment upon this point, he could not fail to have spoken more firmly and consistently.

2. That God is the author of the world is an idea common to Seneca with the Platonists and many earlier speculators, as well as with the Christian teachers. It does not appear, however, that he had any distinct opinion as to whether He were the original Creator, or rather the ultimate Disposer of its elements. Whatever greatness and power he may from time to time ascribe to the divine principle, he is ever haunted by a notion of the self-subsisting energies of matter. He has no belief in God as a personal existence, and he shrinks from asserting that material substance can be the creature of an immaterial principle. Yet he allows that spirit can inform matter, and infuse spirit into all living things. He calls God, in a rhetorical if not an actual sense, the parent of man, and plainly intimates, almost as plainly as St. Paul would have done himself, that all mankind of every race and degree are equally His offspring. He deduces from this generous creed the assurance that all mankind are brethren of one family, and lie under family

obligations one to another. "Virtue, or goodness," he declares pointedly, "admits all men, free men, slaves, and princes." The only distinction between men in the sight of God, is a moral one. This sentiment is truly Christian ; but this, again, is not confined to Christianity. It had been conceived long before by the most liberal of the early philosophers, as we have seen, from Pythagoras downwards ; it had been brought more generally into notice, as we have also seen, by the consequences of the Macedonian conquest, and had become the common property of all the more advanced thinkers of the Grecian world from that time forward. Paul expresses the sentiment more distinctly and more powerfully than any of them, but, so far, that is all.

3. If, however, all mankind are generically equal, they are distinguished in the sight of God one from another by their moral qualities only. Seneca speaks in the strongest manner of the prevalence, and even the universality of sin. St. Paul himself is not more emphatic than Seneca in declaring that "we have all sinned"; "there is none that can acquit himself of sin"; and if anyone calls himself innocent, he means only that he has not been convicted by any other witness than his own conscience. But the duty of man, he adds, is to resist and overcome sin, to amend himself according to the wisdom he can attain unto, to conceive worthily of God and then to imitate Him as he best may. "To imitate God is the best and sufficient worship of God." This too is a Christian sentiment, and, at the same time, it is a sentiment common to the most spiritual of the ancient heathen teachers. But both

they and Seneca were equally unconscious of the considerations which specially attach to the Christian view of human sinfulness; they do not grasp the assurance that man cannot purify himself from sin by his own endeavour without the sanctifying influence of the divine Spirit; and that he cannot relieve himself from the penalty of sin, and obtain forgiveness for it, except through the intervention of a divine Saviour and Redeemer. They have no abiding sense of the fatal consequences of sin, of future retribution, and of judgment to come. Still less, of course, does either Seneca or any of his predecessors conceive of a personal Redeemer, who, under the form of a man, ordained of God, shall judge the world in righteousness at the appointed season, "whereof God hath given assurance unto all men in that He hath raised Him from the dead." Of all this special revelation in Christ there is no word in all the writings of Seneca. Of the great scheme of sanctification by the Holy Spirit, and justification through the imputed merits of the Lord Jesus, of the necessity of faith and the insufficiency of works without faith, there is no hint in the moral system of the philosopher, however devoutly he may speak of the common fatherhood of God and of the universal wickedness of mankind.

Such being the case, can we for a moment suppose that Seneca actually held converse with the Apostle, whose influence on human hearts has been felt so powerfully in all ages; that he imbibed from Paul a few commonplaces on the spiritual character of the Deity, already familiar to himself, with many others

before him, and yet retained no impression of the glorious revelations which the Gospel has first disclosed, and which have since effected so deep and lasting a change in the tone of religious thought wherever they have been allowed to penetrate? What a reflection this would be upon the power of the Gospel, when it was first brought in close contact with the power of mere natural religion! But this we may fairly pronounce to be impossible. We must take upon ourselves to reject without hesitation the pleasing, but fantastic, hypothesis, that Seneca had any personal intercourse with the Apostle at all. Granted that there does exist a similiarity in some of the ideas common to both, still more in some particular expressions, it is much more likely that Paul derived them from a source common to both, than that Seneca learnt them direct from Paul. The Apostle, it must be repeated, was born, and bred, at least in early life, at the city of Tarsus, which was at the time a school of philosophic teaching second only to Athens herself. He can hardly have sojourned there for some years as a Roman citizen, without imbibing some of the spirit of the place, and even the language of its popular teachers, who, as we have seen, were enrolled on the list of Stoic philosophers. We know, indeed, that he was actually conversant with certain writings of the Greeks, and that he did not disdain, when occasion served, to enforce his great doctrine of the common fatherhood of God by a reference to a philosophical poet of the Greek nation. It is no derogation from the divine source of his special revelation, the revelation of Jesus Christ's

place in the spiritual world, to allow that he reflects, on matters of secondary interest the sentiments and the language of the highest natural wisdom.

A few words may still be added with regard to the intrinsic probability of the philosopher and the Apostle having come into such communication with one another as has been imagined. We should examine into the date of their respective preaching, to see whether the language of the one can have been affected by any such acquaintance with the other. No one supposes that Seneca had read the Apostle's Epistle to the Roman disciples, still less the earlier Epistles to the Galatians or the Corinthians. Now, St. Paul did not come personally to Rome before the year 61. At this period Seneca, who had in the previous year given the consent, so fatal to his character, to the murder of Agrippina, was becoming less and less assured of his position, and on the death of Burrus in 62 he withdrew, for the most part, from public affairs, and secluded himself in his suburban villa, seldom or never appearing at the emperor's court. During the remainder of the Apostle's sojourn at Rome he kept thus aloof from the spot where we suppose the prisoner to have been detained; his opportunities of visiting him were scanty; he was hardly in a position to seek out a criminal accused of treasonable practices, even if he were disposed to enter into conference with a Jewish stranger on themes on which the last word, in his view, had long been spoken by the Greeks and Romans. Seneca was, indeed, the brother of the Gallio before whom Paul had been brought at Corinth; but Gallio had

taken no interest in Paul's case, and is specially noted for his indifference to questions which agitated the Jewish mind at home and abroad. That this careless gentleman should have notified to his brother the arrival at Rome of a prisoner of high spiritual intelligence, and urged him to seek his acquaintance, and inquire into his doctrine, is a conjecture to which we need pay little heed. The only point of any importance in this branch of our inquiry concerns the actual date of the writings in which the philosopher expresses the sentiments in which we trace a coincidence with Christian sentiment. On this point we may observe that such expressions are scattered almost throughout his various writings, extending from ten or twenty years previous to Paul's arrival down to the period of his own death, about four years later. It is true, indeed, that some of the most striking parallels are to be found among the latest of these writings; but the same liberal and spiritual tone which distinguishes them pervades no less the utterances of an earlier period. It is to be added further that some of the strongest resemblances to Christian teaching would point to books of the New Testament which were not written till after Seneca's death, such as the Gospel of St. John, as well as St. Paul's Pastoral Epistles.

It may suffice, in a sketch like the present, to make these general remarks on the interesting subject before us, and to warn the reader against an attractive hypothesis which has found so much favour among Christian divines with apparently so little reasonable foundation. Even the Fathers of the Church, who were

so near to the date of these supposed communications, seem to have been very commonly seduced by it. Tertullian and Jerome speak warmly of the Christian character of the philosopher's teaching, and call him "our own," or "often our own." Lactantius points out the coincidence between his teaching and the Christian. This yearning to identify the two prompted, no doubt, the forgery of a correspondence of several letters between Paul and Seneca, which dates, perhaps, from the fourth century. These letters were very generally received as genuine for many ages, and materially helped to keep up the delusion. Since the revival of learning their credit has been, indeed, completely overthrown, but the main subject is still brought from time to time into discussion. The connexion between the two great teachers has been recently maintained by Champagny in his "*Cæsars*," with an elaborate comparison of texts; while Aubertin, in his "*Sénèque et St. Paul*," has denied it with a much more comprehensive analysis of the argument. But the English reader may study, with still greater benefit, the acute and exhaustive summary of the whole question by Professor Lightfoot in the dissertation appended to his *Commentary on the Epistle to the Philippians*.

CHAPTER VIII.

ST. PAUL'S RELEASE AND THE BURNING OF ROME.

THE period of two complete years from the spring of A.D. 61 brings us to the corresponding season A.D. 63, and this, accordingly, is the point to which St. Luke conducts us in his account of the Acts of the Apostles. Why the historian's self-imposed task breaks off at this juncture we are unable to say. Neither history nor tradition supplies us with any explanation. The writer was living, and was still a companion of St. Paul, at a later date. "Only Luke is with me," writes the Apostle to Timothy shortly before his martyrdom, which we shall have to assign to a period some years subsequently. The testimony, however, of Luke extends no further than the two years referred to, and during that interval, we may presume, no change of importance took place in the Apostle's condition. Paul was still, in the spring of A.D. 63, a prisoner under custody, awaiting the hearing of his cause, but otherwise preaching and receiving visitors without impediment.

We cannot suppose, however, that the affairs of the Church, and of the Apostle in connection with them, went on wholly during this interval without any incident to mark their progress. The year 62 gives occasion, as we have seen, for four of St. Paul's Epistles,

those to Philemon, to the Colossians, to the Ephesians, and to the Philippians. The first of these relates to Onesimus, the slave of one Philemon, who had fled from his master at Colossæ, in Phrygia, and escaped to Rome, where he seems to have fallen in with Paul for the first time, and to have become through his means a convert to the faith. After keeping him for some time under instruction at Rome, the Apostle takes the opportunity of a certain Tychicus going into the province of Asia to send the converted slave back to his master, thus recognising in a marked way the laws of property as then accepted by the civilized world. He was confident, no doubt, that Philemon, to whom he addresses a letter as to one well known to him, "our dearly beloved and fellow labourer," will not only forgive the restored fugitive, but will also grant him his freedom, for such indulgence was of no unusual occurrence. The occasion of the second of these Epistles was the arrival of Epaphras, another Colossian, who brought with him the contributions entrusted to him by the Philippians, as he passed through their city, for the Apostle's support during his captivity. Epaphras brought also a favourable account of the state of the Church at Colossæ, chequered though it was with intimations of the prevalence there of Judaizing and Gnostic opinions. The seeds of Oriental heresy were beginning to take root among the churches of Asia, and the Christian converts were the less able to resist them, inasmuch as they were falling more and more under the perverse reactionary teaching of the party among themselves which urged the necessity

of circumcision, and of practising the ceremonies of the Jewish law. The Apostle was induced thereupon to address a letter to the Colossians, and another to the Ephesians, in both of which he makes also some specific allusions to the errors of the Gnostics. "Beware," he says to the former, "lest any man spoil you through philosophy and vain deceit, after the tradition of men, after the rudiments of the world, and not after Christ." St. Paul, in all these letters, speaks of himself distinctly as "a prisoner of Jesus Christ," and we may suppose that they were all written about the same time, perhaps in the autumn of the year 62.

At the close of this year the Apostle had been about one year and nine months in captivity at Rome. Nearly five years had elapsed since he had been first arrested at Jerusalem. His appeal had not yet been heard. He had now been brought to the very door of the emperor's judgment-hall, and was, we may suppose, willing and eager to have an opportunity for pleading his own cause and the cause of his divine Master before the highest of all earthly tribunals. Nor, as far as we can learn, had he as yet any misgiving, at least if justice was to be done him, of the final result of this hearing. He might, indeed, entertain apprehensions from the machinations of the Jews in the city, whose indifference, such as it might at first appear, would soon be turned to active enmity, by the continued success of his preaching, and the progress of a new sect in their midst. It has been conjectured, also, that Poppaea, as a patroness of the Jewish residents, and one whom they ventured

perhaps to claim as a proselyte to their faith, would employ her baneful influence against him. Yet, if we accept the view most generally adopted, that, whether his case was brought on for hearing or not, Paul was actually released at the end, or soon after the end of two years, it would seem that no such powerful influence was exerted to his prejudice. As for the possible cause of the delay which evidently occurred, we can only say that much time might have been consumed in bringing to Rome the accusers and witnesses from so great a distance, and that various accidents might have intervened to prolong it. Nero himself may have been profoundly indifferent. On the death of Burrus, the post of prefect of the Praetorians was given to Tigellinus, the basest of all the minions of the court, a man notoriously reckless of the claims of humanity and justice. The governor of Judaea had declared that no mischief had been done, that none was to be apprehended. The prisoner who had appealed for trial might safely it would seem be neglected and forgotten.

During the short interval that now elapsed, Paul wrote his Epistle to the Philippians. He could speak with satisfaction of the success of the Gospel through his bonds. He could announce his anticipation of approaching trial without alarm; for after reviewing the prospect of life or death before him, and adding that to him "to live is Christ, and to die is gain," he adds, with an apparent inward assurance, "I know that I shall abide, and continue with you all for your furtherance and joy of faith" "that your rejoicing may be more abundant by my coming to

you again." This evident expectation of revisiting his disciples abroad seems to afford some presumption for the common arrangement, which places this as the latest of the four epistles of the first captivity at Rome. The Apostle goes on from hence to warn the Philippians, as he had so recently warned the churches of Asia, of the danger they incurred from the perversion of the Judaizing party among them, and exhorts them with all his customary fervour to walk worthily of the Gospel, and to avoid disputations among themselves. The epistle concludes with the significant intimation above cited of the success of the Gospel in the very household of the emperor. This document was conveyed to the Philippians by Epaphras. The only fellow-labourers who had accompanied Paul so far, and still remained with him, were Luke, Aristarchus, and Demas.

The question, indeed, is still agitated, whether the Apostle was ever released at all from the captivity recorded by St. Luke; and no doubt, in the absence of any early historical statement to that effect, we must feel some difficulty in affirming it. Yet the general consent of the ecclesiastical writers points to such a release at the end of the two years, to subsequent journeys of St. Paul during the period that followed, and to his falling again into captivity at Rome, and there suffering martyrdom before the end of Nero's reign.

The first argument, indeed, for such release which we must notice hardly deserves the serious consideration of those who are only bent on sifting historical and critical evidence. We may remember,

however, that St. Paul, writing to the Romans in the year 58, had said that having a great desire to come unto them, he would do so whenever he took his "journey into Spain."¹ Many persons have imagined, as a matter of sentiment, both in ancient and modern times, that no word of an inspired Apostle could possibly fall to the ground, but that if he had been inspired to intimate an intention of doing anything, such intention must undoubtedly have been fulfilled to the letter; whereas no opportunity for such a visit would be left, unless we suppose an interval between a first release from captivity and a second and final arrest.

Again it is urged, we find, that the very earliest of our ecclesiastical writers, St. Clement, sojourning at Rome towards the end of the first century, speaks of Paul having arrived at "the bounds of the West," and having "borne witness before the rulers"; and this testimony has been commonly cited as evidence of the supposed journey into Spain. But if this statement be cited to show that Paul visited Spain, it might perhaps equally be cited to show that he was tried and sentenced there, which no one certainly supposes to be St. Clement's meaning. Surely it is quite possible that this writer, himself apparently a Greek, and addressing a congregation of Jews or Greeks at Corinth, may have been satisfied with specifying Rome, the Western metropolis, as the bounds of the West, just as a writer from New York at the present day might, under like circumstances, so designate in rhetorical

¹ *Romans xv. 24.*

language the most eminent city of the Western hemisphere in modern times. The so-called testimony of the Muratorian Canon in the second century, however neatly restored by the latest modern criticism, is a mere fragment without a context; and Eusebius, who is claimed as an authority on the subject, writing as late as the fourth century, appeals only to the current tradition, and has no historical evidence to produce. On the other hand, it may be thought worthy of consideration that no church in Spain ever claimed to have been founded by St. Paul; it is to St. Peter, not to St. Paul, that the mediæval legends of the Spanish peninsula assign, whether he was ever there or not, the consecration of its first bishops.¹

But if this argument be set aside as at best inconclusive, there are, no doubt, some passages in the pastoral epistles which it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to reconcile fairly with the theory of a single captivity followed by martyrdom. Thus, for instance, St. Paul, in his Second Epistle to Timothy, speaks very clearly of his approaching trial and execution:— “For I am now ready,” he says, “to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished my course.”² But at the same time he gives directions about clothes and books he had left behind him in Troas, which, if he had never revisited Troas since his captivity at Jeru-

¹ The genuineness of the inscription supposed to have been found in Lusitania (Gruter, p. 238), is generally rejected from internal evidence. The fancy that St. Paul visited Britain is utterly discredited on all hands.

² 2 Tim. iv. 6.

salem and subsequently at Rome, must have been five or even ten years previously. Surely then he must have been released from a first imprisonment, and have continued his accustomed journeyings from church to church, and to Troas among other places, in the interval between a first and a second arrest. Nor are there wanting other internal marks in this Epistle which favour this view. The critics who pretend that the objections to it are insuperable are generally constrained to argue against the genuineness of the Epistle itself, and, indeed, of both the Epistles to Timothy—a course which presents other difficulties which need not now detain us.

Accepting, then, as on the whole the easiest solution, the common tradition of Paul's release, whether with or without a formal trial, we must place it subsequently, of course, to the two years indicated by St. Luke; that is, after the spring of the year 63, but before the great fire at Rome, and the violent persecution of the Christians which so soon followed thereupon. We cannot suppose that a preacher of the Gospel so eminent as the Apostle, had he been still in custody at such a crisis, would have been allowed to escape from the fury of the populace and the cruelty of the government, after they were once excited. Having quitted the city, however, Paul is supposed to have gone in the first instance to Macedonia in the course of the year 63, and thence to Colossæ, where he had already prepared Philemon to receive him, and in the following year to have accomplished the voyage he had so long meditated into Spain. It may be assumed that, if he once reached that remote country,

he could not fail to make a stay there of some duration ; but the Epistles to Timothy and Titus indicate from internal evidence of various kinds that they were written later than this, and that the writer had then visited the East very recently. Accordingly we conclude that St. Paul returned from Spain to Asia ; and there seems some reason to believe that he presented himself once more to the churches at Ephesus, Miletus, and Corinth, and even in Crete ; that he journeyed into Macedonia, and proceeded to Nicopolis in Epirus, and thence probably made his way finally to Italy and Rome once more.

Slight and shadowy as are the hints we have received of the Apostle's doings and journeyings subsequently to his first Roman captivity, it would seem that they must have occupied a considerable period of time, and we cannot suppose that he had returned to Rome till after the terrible crisis which the Christian Church was at this moment undergoing. The conflagration of the year A.D. 64 is doubly famous, both for the greatness of the catastrophe itself, and still more, at least in our eyes, from the persecution to which it gave occasion—the first in the long series of systematic and legalised cruelties to which the Faith continued to be exposed for a period of two centuries and a half succeeding. We possess, moreover, as our chief authority for the circumstances both of the fire and the persecution, the full and striking record of the historian Tacitus ; and some account of both the one and the other under the guidance of not only a contemporary but probably an eye-witness of them will materially assist in completing our view of

St. Paul's connection with the metropolis of the Gentile world.

The Palatine Hill, the seat of the imperial residence, within the precincts of which we have conjectured Paul to have been confined, presented on its summit a nearly level area of an irregular lozenge shape, which may be aptly compared, both in size and figure, with the space inclosed between Oxford-street and Conduit-street in London. The sides of this eminence sloped naturally, or were scarped artificially, towards the Forum on the north, the Velabrum on the west, the Circus Maximus on the south, and the valley which divided it from the Cælian Hill on the east. This entire space was occupied in the time of the Republic either by sacred edifices or by mansions and gardens of the nobles, and many of the chief public men of Rome are recorded to have had their dwellings there. There had been the house of Octavius, the ancestor of the emperor Augustus ; but his family was not one of the highest in the state, and its mansion was a modest one. Under this roof, however, Augustus continued to live ; for he affected moderation in his tastes, and carefully shunned the appearance of outvying in his personal surroundings the chiefs of higher rank and greater private means than he had himself inherited. When his house suffered from a casual fire, the citizens had insisted on rebuilding it for him on an ampler scale ; but he still restrained their liberality within modest bounds, and allotted a portion of the extended structure to public purposes. He took pains, however, to secure a wider site at the centre of the hill, contiguous to his own

residence, whereon to erect a sumptuous temple to his patron god, Apollo, together with a public library, which with its adjuncts occupied a considerable space, and became the most conspicuous object of the whole eminence. The princes who succeeded indulged themselves more freely. Tiberius added to the imperial dwelling other buildings, so far distinct from it that they received the special designation of the *Domus Tiberiana*. But Tiberius was more temperate than his next successor. Caligula added greatly to the palace, and caused the temple of Castor and Pollux, abutting on the Forum, to be transformed into a vestibule thereto. The scale of this prince's additions may be conjectured from his extraordinary freak in constructing a bridge across the hollow, to connect the palace with the temple of Jupiter in the Capitol, so as to enable the ruler of Rome to pay his visits to the ruler of Olympus above the heads of the miserable mortals who were subject to both of them in common. This bridge is so analogous to that which Herod threw across the Tyropœum between his palace and the Temple at Jerusalem, that we may be tempted to surmise that Caligula adopted the idea from conversation with his friend Agrippa. If, however, this structure was completed during his short reign, it seems to have been demolished immediately afterwards; no further mention of it occurs, and some apparent traces recently discovered of the spring of the first arch from the north-west corner of the Palatine constitute the whole of its remaining fragments. Claudius seems to have abstained from further additions to the imperial residence. This emperor's tastes, as regarded

personal display, were moderate ; and in this and other respects he took Augustus as his model, and shrank from the selfish ostentation of Caligula as much as from the morose reserve of Tiberius. But with Nero there began a new era of extravagance. This mighty builder conceived a colossal scheme, first for extending the great imperial mansion over the whole surface of the hill on which it was originally planted, and then connecting it by arcades and corridors with additional structures on the summits of the hills adjacent, sweeping into its embrace halls, temples, and patrician villas on all sides of it. Considerable progress had apparently been made in these extensions on the Palatine when the event occurred which was to give him an opportunity for enlarging his plans to the utmost.

While the Palatine summit was crowned with an array of buildings of solid brick and marble, the lower grounds surrounding it were for the most part occupied with structures of wood and light materials, packed closely together, and rising to a height of many stories, especially where they abutted on the face of the cliffs behind them. Such, at least, was the condition of the Velabrum, a densely-crowded quarter ; and such, we may suppose, was the condition also of the opposite valley between the Palatine and the Cælian, through which ran the Appian Way, one of the most important arteries of the city. The Circus, which filled the Murcian or Myrtle valley on the south, was a more substantial edifice ; but this, too, though propped on brick or stone, was crowned from end to end with wooden galleries. On the north the descent

into the Forum presented an open space of some width ; but here, too, slight wooden fabrics lined the slopes of the hills on either side, and lay so close together as to make the eminences difficult of access. Across the Palatine itself there were no avenues for wheeled vehicles. The hill was, for the most part, mounted by steps, and the alleys which ran between the palaces and temples on its summit afforded means of circulation to foot-passengers only.

But while the summit of this central hill was chiefly occupied by the lordly mansions of the emperor and his nobles, among the cabins of the poorer classes crowded at its feet lay many public edifices, noted in the national history, and dear to the imagination of the Roman people. The Forum was itself filled with statues and memorials of their ancient worthies ; it was adorned with halls and temples erected by the greatest of their heroes ; it was skirted with objects of antiquarian interest, with shrines associated with their earliest religious rites, poor, indeed, in decoration, and diminutive in their proportions, but instinct, as it might seem, with the life of the nation. The Forum Romanum was still, as it had always been, the centre of the civic life of the people, and it was crowded with the objects which still preserved their sense of the historical continuity of their institutions, both secular and spiritual. The Forum was still the connecting link between the past and the present, both in their political and their religious aspects. It was now about to be overwhelmed in one common ruin, and this connecting link was to be severed for ever.

The historian Tacitus, from whom we have received

a precise and graphic account of the great fire, introduces it in a manner which, to the Christian reader, must seem eminently significative. The monster who sat on the throne at this moment had addicted himself, from the death of his mother, and soon after of his minister Burrus, to every vice and criminal indulgence. The disgrace and retirement of Seneca had left him still more free to embrace his evil courses without shame or scruple. His sins against the national prejudices have involved his memory, perhaps, in greater odium among the Romans themselves, than the enormities of lust and cruelty which have made his name a by-word with Christians and moralists in all ages. The reader must not be afflicted with more than a remote allusion to the nameless wickedness which he now flaunted in the face of a society, which, even in its own deep degradation, was both disgusted and alarmed at such excesses ; but the Christian cannot fail to be reminded in the dreadful conflagration of Rome of the destruction of the Cities of the Plain by fire and brimstone in the record of Scripture.

It was on the 14th of the calends of August, on the nineteenth day of July in the year 64, the 817th of the city, that the fire broke out among some habitations at the eastern extremity of the Circus, where the two hollows, the Cælian and the Murcian, diverge, the one in a north-western, the other in a south-western direction, embracing between them the eastern angle of the Palatine.¹ There was a high wind, and its direction was evidently from the east. The shops among which the fire had its origin were filled with materials of a

¹ Tac., *Annal.*, xv. 38, fol.

combustible nature, such, probably, as oils, gums, and spices, as well as wood, and stuffs of various kinds. The flames soon came to a head, and swept from roof to roof, for the buildings in this crowded locality must have been generally contiguous. The Circus itself was soon wrapt in fire, and if its solid substructions still offered resistance, the lighter structures above and alongside of it must have crumbled like touchwood, desiccated, as they were, by the drought of an Italian midsummer. The conflagration leaping from arch to arch soon penetrated to the Forum Boarium and the Velabrum, and quickly turning the western corner of the Palatine, coursed furiously onward in the direction of the Roman Forum. It was under the western slope of the hill that the greatest number of public edifices and memorials perished ; for here had been the cradle of the Roman people, here were the temple of Vesta and Hercules, the Regia of Numa, and the Ruminal figtree, the temple of Castor and Pollux, the fountain of Juturna, the cave of Cacus, the Puteal and the Rostra. The flames rose to the summit of the Palatine, and devoured, as they rose, the historic temple of Jupiter Stator itself. The palace of the Cæsars, according to Tacitus, whose authority should be conclusive, fell a victim to them, unless we ascribe the term palatium in this passage to the new buildings with which Nero was at the moment connecting the imperial mansion on the Palatine with the villa of Mæcenas on the Esquiline opposite. No doubt the fire swept the ridge of the Velia, which joined these hills together. It is allowed, however, that the temple of Apollo on the Palatine was standing, and apparently

uninjured, at a later period, for the library attached to it was consumed, we are told, in the fire of Commodus, a hundred and twenty years afterwards. The Capitoline escaped, perhaps, wholly ; but not so the Aventine, where the loss of the temple of Luna is specifically mentioned.

But the ruin caused in the six days that this conflagration raged was not all. After the fire had ceased, apparently from want of fuel, a change took place in the wind, which now blew from the opposite quarter, and another fire breaking out in the Æmilian gardens of Tigellinus under the Pincian Hill, a second conflagration extended with no less fury southward, and swept a large portion of the city from that point to the Quirinal and the Viminal. This fresh outbreak lasted three days, and this, too, seems to have been intercepted by the obstacle of rising ground, and of more solid constructions. The means of arresting such a fire at Rome were to the last degree imperfect ; but it would seem that the rabble of the city took advantage of the confusion, not only for plunder, but even to assist the destruction with their own hands. Many, it was reported, were seen setting the torch to houses here and there in various directions, so that from the heights islands of flame might be observed on all sides, apparently unconnected with one another. It was whispered that some of these wretches declared, on being seized, that they were acting under orders, and the suspicions of the people, thus aroused, found vent in denunciations of the emperor himself as the real author of the horrible mischief. The citizens had begun, perhaps, to look with jealousy on the vast

structures with which their ruler was already filling the centre of the city, and preparing one enormous palace for his own insolent glorification. Stories were repeated of a frightful wish he had been heard to utter, that “the world might perish in fire”; not, as the tragedian had said, “after my death,” but during his own lifetime. He was at Antium when the fire broke out; but he had hastened back to Rome, and had enjoyed the dreadful sight from a turret of his palace, singing and dancing the mime of the “Burning of Troy” during the progress of the national catastrophe. He could not but perceive that the fire, which swept away the narrow and tortuous lanes by which the lower quarters of the city were encumbered, would clear the area required for his own extravagant constructions. Might not the monster have kindled the flames himself, or, if the fire was really accidental, might he not have forbidden or hindered its extinction? Tacitus, writing about forty years afterwards, mentions such a charge against him as a dark insinuation only; but Suetonius, little if at all later, does not scruple to give it more direct sanction; and Dion, after a longer interval, accepts it as generally accredited.

It is not improbable that the destruction of the old cathedral of St. Paul’s, together with so many other churches, with all their monuments and memorials of our own mediæval religion, in the Great Fire of London, had a considerable effect in obliterating the prejudices and superstitions of the English people at that period. At Rome a similar effect would doubtless be produced, and, to a much greater extent, by the Neronian conflagration. The old Italian religion of the Romans,

notwithstanding the revival under Augustus, was already tottering to its fall. New superstitions and foreign cults were overgrowing and discrediting it. There only wanted a great catastrophe, which should show at once the impotence of the old divinities and sweep away the familiar monuments of their worship, to give a final blow to the popular faith. The memorials of the ancient legends could never be replaced ; we do not hear of any attempt being made to replace them. New temples arose for the most indispensable of the national solemnities ; but many a long-cherished tradition was henceforth deprived of the visible token with which it was associated in the minds of the people. It may be remarked that, from this time forward, the popular religion at Rome ceases to be historic, and loses thereby its main hold upon the popular imagination. The burning of Rome inflicted a deep and lasting blow upon the religion of the Romans, and cleared the field, no doubt, for the new developments of spiritual belief which were already impending. The first effect of the crisis was disastrous to the little community of Christian converts ; but it became, by God's providence, a means for the ultimate advancement of the faith. It was the first step towards the public recognition and the final acceptance of Christianity.

CHAPTER IX.

THE PERSECUTION OF THE CHRISTIANS.

NERO was not insensible to the danger into which he had fallen. He sought the most ready means of dispelling it by humouring the people in the ways which had proved generally efficacious on other occasions of public calamity. He threw open the Campus Martius, with its porches and halls, and the Baths of Agrippa, for shelter to the houseless multitude. He caused temporary buildings to be hastily erected for them. He brought the most necessary furniture from all the neighbouring towns, and reduced the price of grain to the lowest fraction of the charge at which it was ordinarily supplied them. But these gratifications had failed to soothe their discontent, exasperated as it was by the prejudice suddenly excited against him, when the second outburst of fire arose in the gardens of his own creature Tigellinus. The insinuation gained ready credence that he had commanded the conflagration in order to clear an ampler space for his insane projects. He purposed, it was affirmed, to erect not a palace only, but a new city, and to call it by his own name. No conception, it was supposed could be too gigantic, no design too monstrous for the greatest and most wilful autocrat the world had ever known.

True, indeed, it was that Nero actually contemplated an immense extension of the circuit of his imperial residence; true it was that he planned the rebuilding of his squalid capital after the fashion of the great Oriental cities, spacious and regularly designed, which the Romans had long admired and envied. Even in the few remaining years of his principate he effected, heedless and indolent as he is represented, the completion of his own Golden House, the wonder of Rome and of the world for the brief period of its existence, and also the transformation of the close, narrow, and crooked alleys of the city into broad and airy avenues. But these are works which need not now detain us. We shall be more interested in observing how at last, when every other attempt to conciliate popular feeling had failed, the tyrant succeeded in diverting the odium of the fire from himself to the innocent Christians, and how he gave them up to the refined and barbarous punishments of that which is called the first Christian persecution.

We have seen how the Gospel had penetrated into various classes at Rome, and had found a domicile even in the imperial palace. There is no direct evidence, however, of its having attracted any persons of distinction, or made itself an actual power in Roman society at this period. That one great lady, for instance, named Pomponia Græcina, the wife of Aulus Plautius who conquered Britain under Claudius, had become a convert, though fondly believed by many commentators on early Church history, is a surmise of the flimsiest character. We read indeed in Tacitus that this noble matron was cited by her husband before a family

council as addicted to a “foreign superstition.”¹ This occurrence took place in the year A.D. 57. She had, it seems, withdrawn herself from the society of her class, and was plunged in a profound melancholy. But she had been deeply distressed, as was noted, at the murder of Julia, the daughter of Drusus fourteen years before. Her strange deportment might be due simply to excessive grief, and the family council exonerated her from the charge of superstition now laid against her. She continued to mourn for many years after, and became, indeed, famous among her contemporaries for the signal fidelity of her sorrow. If she had really embraced the tenets of a foreign creed, it might have been the Jewish, the Egyptian, or the Syrian, for all these made their converts among the sensitive minds of the Roman women of the period, and provoked thereby the jealous anger of the men. The Christian it was the less likely to have been, inasmuch as the date of her trial was four years before St. Paul’s arrival in Rome, and one year before the arrival of his epistle to the disciples in the city.

Another instance of a reputed conversion in the upper ranks may be cited here; though this, too, stands on no secure foundation. The attempt has been made to identify the Pudens and Claudia, whose greetings are mentioned in St. Paul’s Second Epistle to Timothy, with persons of distinction in the city. Pudens, it is surmised, is the son of the Pudentinus whose name is read together with his own in a well-known British inscription at Chichester. This was the seat of a king Cogidubnus, who had attached him-

¹ Tac., *Annal.*, xiii. 32.

self to the gens of the emperor Claudius, and assumed his gentile designation. It is conjectured that this Claudius Cogidubnus may have had a daughter called after himself Claudia ; that she may have married Pudens, and have settled eventually at Rome with him. These two suppositions granted, she may, very possibly, it is said, be the same Claudia who is complimented more than once by Martial as a British lady of great accomplishments, and the wife of a certain Pudens, a friend of his own. The dates of Martial's compositions are too uncertain to allow us to argue upon them one way or the other ; but, at least, it must be remarked that the Pudens of the poet was a man of licentious morality, such as might pass, indeed, with little comment among men of the world at the time, but from which the Apostle would surely have turned with indignation. Another guess, that the Claudia of the epistle was the daughter of the British hero Caractacus, brought up as a client of the emperor's during her father's captivity at Rome, is hardly less attractive, but this can only be regarded as at best an idle fancy, besides that it is liable to the same fatal objection as the former. Again, if we look from particular instances to the general tone of literature of the day, we shall be still less able to discover any distinct impression made at this period by Christianity upon the higher classes of society. The remains, indeed, of Roman literature in the time of Claudius and Nero are singularly scanty, and are almost wholly confined to the works of Seneca and the epic poem of Lucan. Both these writers make some mention of the Jews ; but we have seen that Seneca bears no

witness to the existence of Christianity, which is at least equally unknown to Lucan.

Light, then, as is the impression which the undoubted preaching of the Gospel at Rome can be supposed to have made on the feelings of the higher classes, there seems little reason to imagine that it made itself hateful to the lower, among whom it no doubt penetrated deeper. It was not the meek unoffending Christians who caused the sectarian troubles among the Jewish population of the city; but the Jews, who harassed and maltreated them. The peculiarity of their usages and manners, the straitness of their demeanour, the ascetic restraints which they practised, were not, we may suppose, more offensive to the licentious multitudes around them than those of the Jews themselves, and other devotees of foreign cults. If some among them spoke too openly of the expected destruction of the world by fire, this startling prognostication could not have made them more obnoxious than the Stoics, who proclaimed a final conflagration of all things. “*Communis mundo superstes rogus,*” was the declaration of Lucan, in the tone of the current philosophy, almost at the very moment that Rome, the head and mistress of the world, was blazing on her own funeral pyre. We can discover no reason for any special jealousy being entertained of the Christians, or for the burning of the city being imputed to them, as we are assured it was, and for the cruel imputation being caught up with unscrupulous ardour, and the indignation of the populace successfully directed against them.

The account, indeed, which we have received from

the historian Tacitus, corroborated in the main by the slighter notice of Suetonius, describes the persecution which followed as falling in its full force upon the Christian community. The story will be most plainly and vividly told in the words of our great authority himself. After describing the fire, and the plans adopted for the reconstruction of the city with a view to its greater stability and convenience, he adds :—

“ These things were supplied by human counsels ; next to these, the gods were to be appeased by sacrifices and ceremonies, such as should be enjoined by the books of the Sibyl ; and supplications were made accordingly to Vulcan, Ceres, Proserpine, and Juno. . . . But neither by human aid, nor by the prince’s largesses, nor again by appeal to the divinities, was the common rumour dissipated, which insinuated that the conflagration had been commanded. In order to stifle this suspicion, Nero accused and exposed to special torments certain wicked and detestable people who were commonly styled Christians. They derived their names from a certain Christus, who had suffered death under Pontius Pilatus, in the reign of Tiberius ; but their abominable superstition, though checked for a time, was again breaking forth, and, spreading not only over Judaea, where it had its origin, but through the city, whither everything atrocious and shameless comes together, and is practised openly. Some people were at once arrested, and, on their confession and testimony, a great number of others were convicted, not so much on the charge of the burning, as of their hatred to mankind in general. These were put to death, and mockery was added to their sufferings ;

for some were sewn up in beasts' skins and torn in pieces by dogs, others were fastened to crosses and set on fire to give light at night. Nero threw his own gardens open for the spectacle, and held chariot races on the occasion, mingling with the mob in the garb of a driver, or himself driving. Culprits they might be, and worthy of extreme punishments; nevertheless, the people could not help pitying them, as condemned for no public advantage, but to gratify the cruelty of a single individual.”¹

Such is the record of the great historian, who bears the highest character for the truth and accuracy of his statements, wherever he is not liable to the influence of political partizanship or misled by malicious fabrications. This account, confirmed, as has been said, by Suetonius, and again very faintly countenanced by a casual expression of Martial, has been currently received by our ecclesiastical writers, and is sufficient, no doubt, to establish the fact of a cruel persecution of the disciples of the faith at this time resident in Rome. We know too well the indiscriminate ferocity with which the Romans chastised the objects of public hate or fear to be startled at the flagrant iniquity of the proceeding. The shocking barbarity of wrapping the victims in cloths saturated with grease, and burning them on poles or crosses to give light to a popular festival, had been practised before, and con-

¹ Tacitus combines the gardens of Nero with the games of the Circus, and he is supposed to refer to the Circus of Nero, or of Caligula before him, on the slope of the Vatican Hill. If this was the place, it is perhaps the identical spot now occupied by the basilica of St. Peter, or the Vatican palace.

tinued, perhaps, to be practised again upon other criminals.¹ But, whether on this occasion the historian has accurately discriminated between the Christians and the Jews, from whom the heathens at Rome could hardly at the time distinguish them ; whether the persecution fell more or less upon both, who were liable to the same charge in the mouths of the heathen of “hatred of the human race” ; whether the Jews, being “the first arrested,” evaded the charge by “testifying” against the Christians, are matters which may still admit of consideration and conjecture. It was a common charge in later times against the heretics that they were wont to inform against the orthodox believers ; and it is not impossible that the Jews may, in this instance, have anticipated them. We have seen that the so-called “correspondence of Paul and Seneca” is spurious ; nevertheless, the forgery is probably a genuine composition of the fourth, or even the third century, and some of its statements seem to be derived from documents existing at the time. Accordingly, when we read in a pretended letter of Seneca, giving some account of the fire and the persecution, that both “Christians and Jews are suffering on the charge of contriving the conflagration,” we may not unreasonably conjecture that the injustice was not wholly confined to our own brethren in the faith.² It

¹ Comp. Senec., *Epist.* xiv., and also Juvenal, i. 155, viii. 235, who seem, however, in both places to allude to this particular event.

² *Epist.* xii. This “correspondence” may be compared with the declamations and controversies commonly composed in the decline of Roman literature, in which a given topic was treated

must be observed, however, that none of our authorities mention any persons of Roman name, or of social distinction, among the victims. The charge was launched apparently at an obscure set of foreigners only. If Pomponia and Claudia were really converts they must certainly have escaped the fate of their fellow-believers. Though the writers of ecclesiastical history speak uniformly of this as the "first persecution" of the Christians, and dilate upon its horrors, the records of the Christian martyrs, whether genuine or fictitious, embrace the names of none of the sufferers in it.¹ The vague reference that is made to a general persecution throughout the empire as following upon it, is supported by no documentary evidence. The outbreak of violence caused by a momentary panic seems to have speedily subsided into a feeling of compassion; and the shocking barbarities which at first it sanctioned, were not, we may believe, repeated.

Nor is it unreasonable to suppose that both Tacitus and Suetonius may have been led into error in referring the persecution to the Christians only, and making no mention of the Jews who suffered with them or before them. At the time of the fire the

as an exercise of ingenuity. Such compositions were not meant to deceive, but if they were well and carefully executed, and discussed matters of real interest, they might eventually obtain a credit they did not deserve. Some of the speeches which pass under Cicero's name labour under suspicion of forgery of this kind, and the "Epistle of Sallust to Julius Cæsar" is perhaps convicted of such an origin. Such writings, fictitious as they are, may still possess some historical value.

¹ Mosheim, *De rebus Christ, ante Constant., sœc. I, § 34.*

Jews were viewed with dislike and alarm on account of the riots they had so recently excited in the city, and of the rebellious spirit which was at the moment about to break out in their own country, while the Christians were a separate and quiet sect barely heeded or heard of. But forty years later, when our historians were writing, the situation was apparently reversed. The Jews had been prostrated and crushed, and though they actually rose in revolt once more under Hadrian, they might be little regarded by the contemporaries of his predecessor Trajan. But the Christians, on the other hand, had emerged at the later period into greater notoriety. They had been watched and controlled, and sometimes maltreated, through a whole generation, and Trajan was now himself engaged in something like a systematic persecution of them. The great bishop Ignatius, of Antioch, was on his way to suffer martyrdom in the arena at Rome. The Jews had receded from the historian's field of vision, the Christians had insensibly glided into it.

CHAPTER X.

SECOND IMPRISONMENT AND MARTYRDOM OF
ST. PAUL AT ROME.

IT pleased Providence to remove the Apostle from Rome during the time of this fiery trial, and to give him other work to do for the propagation of the faith before he was called to seal his testimony to it with his blood. While Paul was journeying and preaching in Greece and Asia, and possibly in Spain, the great philosopher whose name has been so closely associated with him, however little they may have been personally acquainted, was going on his way to death before him. Seneca was about to expiate his weaknesses by a bloody end, and to cast a last halo of dignity over his career as a martyr to truth and virtue. While the Christian preacher, on escaping from his detention within the precincts of the palace, was recommencing his active life of journeying and teaching, the pagan sage still shrank from showing himself to the public gaze, and pleaded bodily infirmity as an excuse for retiring first to his gardens in the suburbs, and soon after to his villas in the country. He still occupied himself with study and composition, and kept himself aloof, we may believe, from the intrigues of the nobles who were plotting against the life of the

emperor, whom they detested as the special enemy of their class.

In the year 65 the conspiracy of Calpurnius Piso was planned, but it was speedily detected, and he suffered accordingly, together with Plautius Lateranus, and the poet Lucan, the nephew of Seneca, and many other magnates of the city. Nero had long wished for an excuse for consigning his former preceptor to death, and it was easy to cast suspicion of complicity upon Seneca. The old man denied the charge, but his denial was of no avail, and he was commanded to put an end to his own life. Such was the custom of the time in cases where the tyrant shrank from exacting an execution of a Roman citizen under legal forms. The indignity of a compulsory suicide was never inflicted upon the Christian martyrs. The narrative of the last sufferings of Seneca constitutes one of the most harrowing tales of the imperial history.

The Apostle was at the same time drawing nigh to the bloody end which was appointed for him, but neither is the immediate cause assigned, nor have the circumstances of his death been so precisely detailed for us. The rebellion of the Jews broke out in the year 66, and at this period Paul, as we may suppose from the slight indications before noticed, was first, perhaps, in Spain, and afterwards in Asia. Nero passed the greater part of the following year in Greece, and the Apostle, who repaired from Asia to Macedonia, may actually have crossed his path. The emperor returned to his capital at the end of the year, and thither the Apostle was about to follow him.

It appears from Paul's Epistle to Titus despatched from Ephesus in the autumn that he purposed to pass the winter at Nicopolis in Epirus, in the neighbourhood of the Christian communities which he had perhaps himself already planted in Illyricum.¹ But all his steps are now involved in the merest conjecture. It may be that he was arrested at Nicopolis at the instigation of the Jews, as on the former occasion, as a disturber of the peace and a disloyal citizen ; it may be that since the persecution at Rome the name of Christian had fallen into special disfavour, and that the authorities beyond the sea thought to show their zeal for the public interests by sending the Christian preacher bound to Rome. If, however, a legal persecution of the Christians had been formally proclaimed throughout the empire, as has been too loosely asserted, he would surely have been martyred on the spot where he was apprehended. However this may be, we seem next to hear of him as a prisoner at Rome, writing the second of his letters to Timothy, attended by Luke, but by Luke only. Demas, as he complains, had forsaken him, and departed to Thessalonica ; Crescens he had probably sent himself to Galatia, as well as Titus to Dalmatia, and Tychicus to Ephesus. He desires Timothy to come himself, and to bring Mark with him, for he would be useful to him in the ministry. It is evident that the charge against Paul, whatever it was, did not include his nearest associates, and accordingly it could hardly have been aimed at

¹ *Epist. to Titus* iii. 12 : — “for I have determined” (*κέκρικα*) “there to winter,”—showing that the Apostle was still a free man.

him simply as a Christian. It is evident, also, that though his confinement may have been stricter now than on the former occasion, still it did not preclude him from conversing with his friends, and directing them in the work of the Christian ministry.

It is important then to remark, that the indications of danger or suffering which are given in this epistle refer to the Apostle himself alone, and in no respect to the disciples generally. He was himself under arrest, and might speedily expect his condemnation. It would appear that his case had been already heard a first time, and he had been respite. "At my first answer," he says, "no man stood with me, but all men forsook me. . . . Notwithstanding, the Lord stood with me, and strengthened me . . . and I was delivered out of the mouth of the lion." Nevertheless, he expects no such deliverance a second time; he is now "ready to be offered," and the time of his "departure is at hand." "I have fought a good fight," he adds, "I have finished my course, I have kept the faith. Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, shall give me at that day; and not to me only, but to them also that"—not suffer under persecution such as mine, but—"love His appearing." He allows, indeed, that "all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution"; that is, all must learn to "suffer hardness," all must expect "to endure afflictions," inasmuch as "in the last days perilous times shall come." But he allows Timothy and his fellow-disciples to anticipate that some period of time will be yet allotted them for the long work they have to

perform ; there is no immediate prospect of an end to their labours and trials ; they are not, as he is, about to be offered up ; in short, there is no bloody persecution of the faith at this time to be apprehended in Rome.

Such seems to be the unavoidable inference from the language of this Epistle, however difficult it may be to reconcile it with the presumed condition of the Christians at the city at this moment. Nor is it much more easy to reconcile it with the tone of St. Peter's Epistles to the Jews or strangers scattered throughout the provinces of Asia Minor, which must be assigned to a date very slightly antecedent to the period before us. In these addresses the Apostle dwells, not upon any trials or sufferings of his own, but much upon those of the disciples, some that they were actually suffering, others that seemed to be impending. He leads us to believe that, in many regions of the East, the Christians were at this very time, that is, after the Neronian persecution, but before the death of Paul, exposed to violence and cruelty. There is no reason on this account to suppose that the recent action of the Government at Rome was extended throughout the provinces. But it is probable that the prevailing hostility of the Jews to their Christian brethren continued to break out in irregular attacks upon them, such as we read of repeatedly in the Acts of the Apostles, and that these attacks constituted a source of constant danger to them. There is, in fact, no reason to conclude that the systematic persecution of the faith by legal methods which prevailed in the

time of Trajan, had as yet been organized either at Rome or in the provinces.

The Epistles of St. Peter are dated from "Babylon." Ancient tradition, upheld by the authority of many early writers, asserts that Babylon is here used as the mystical name of Rome, and that it was actually from Rome that the Apostle wrote. But except for this tradition, which may obviously be referred to a merely sentimental origin, as satisfying the yearning of the early Christians for some trace of a combined foundation of the great Roman Church by the Apostle to the Jews and the Apostle to the Gentiles, there seems no ground whatever for deviating from the plain logical rule of interpreting words in their natural, rather than in their rhetorical or allegorical signification. Though the "mighty Babylon" of ancient days had long fallen, and the remains of its greatness had been usurped by Ctesiphon and Seleucia, no insignificant population was still dwelling within the circuit of its mouldering walls, and the colony of Jews which at this period frequented it was numerous and even politically important. From Babylon, then, as the eastern extremity of his missionary travels, St. Peter might naturally address himself to the converts dispersed in the regions of "Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia," mentally reviewing them nearly in their local order from east to west. This is, of course, the reverse of the order in which they would present themselves to his mind if he were writing from the capital of the West. But it is precisely the order in which they would appear to him when he anticipated the journey

which, as we may suppose, he was about to take himself at the moment to Rome. For, though we may by no means subscribe to it as a certain fact, we may not care to dispute the prevalent tradition, even more uniform than the one which we have just rejected, that Peter did actually visit Rome at last. We may embrace the pleasing opinion that the two great Apostles did actually meet on the spot which was destined to become the centre of their common faith for so many ages, and to symbolize that union of the two forms or tendencies of Christian teaching to which they had respectively attached themselves.

The tradition goes on to declare, and if we admit it as a tradition only, and carefully withhold from it the credence we should reserve for facts established on historical testimony, we may fairly allow its probability, that the two Apostles were martyred about the same time, or even on the same day. Under what circumstances sentence was pronounced upon either of them we are, however, absolutely uninformed. It seems idle to examine into the regular forms of legal procedure at Rome, and picture to ourselves the appearance of Paul or of his colleague before the tribunals and the judges of the city. We must confess ourselves ignorant of the exact charge preferred against them; we do not know for certain whether at the last there was any regular and legal charge at all. It would be plainly a mistake to suppose that the early persecutions and attacks upon the Christians were always conducted by regular and legal methods. They were much oftener the result of popular violences, or of the personal antipathy of men in

authority. We have accepted, amidst much conflicting opinion, the hypothesis that St. Paul was confined in his second imprisonment during the spring of the year 68, because, in the absence of any evidence to the contrary, it is important to allow as much time as we can to the various journeys the Apostle is supposed to have taken in the interval between the two imprisonments, to the growth of the untoward circumstances to which allusion is made in his latest Epistles, and to the difference of style which, as some think, may be discovered between them and those which belong to an earlier date. It can be shown that the emperor Nero perished on the 9th, or perhaps the 11th, of June in that same year. For some weeks, or even months, before that period, he had been disturbed and dismayed by the approach of his combined enemies. It is very unlikely that he would have taken heed of the obscure Jewish criminal, and presided in person at his trial. It is hardly more likely that his minister Helius, or his prefect, Nymphidius, would have troubled himself in so trifling a matter. Clement of Rome, the first of the Apostolic fathers, says that he “suffered death,” or perhaps more exactly, “bore testimony to the faith,” “before the authorities”;¹ but

¹ Clemens Rom. *ad Corinth.*, i. 5 : μαρτυρήσας ἐπὶ τῷ ιγούμενῷ. The word *μαρτυρέω*, which Clement of Rome here uses, occurs frequently in the writings of the New Testament, but only in the sense of bearing witness, teaching, and such-like. But Clement was himself a contemporary of the writer who so used it; and this accordingly is the sense in which we should expect him also to adopt it. The secondary sense of “suffering martyrdom” became assigned to the word in later

what he plainly means is simply this, that the Apostle proclaimed the faith in the most public manner ; for such is the object of the context, to magnify the extent and the power of St. Paul's preaching, and so it may accordingly be rendered : "he went to the farthest West, he preached in the highest places of the world, and so he came to his end."

But, the story goes that Peter and Paul both suffered death at Rome, and both, it is said, on the same day, during the reign of Nero. If our chronology is correct, which may be still an open question, we cannot reconcile the statement of the tradition precisely with the evidence of history ; for the exact computations of our genuine authorities place the death of Nero, as we have seen, on the 9th or 11th of June ; while the martyrologies on which the tradition is founded give the 29th of the month for the day of the martyrdom. It would be lost labour to look more closely into the flimsy materials we possess for forming any decided judgment on this question. Still following, however, the guidance of a phantom tradition, we are taught to look for the place of St. Paul's martyrdom to a spot called Aquæ Salviæ, now Trefontane, about two miles from the walls on the way to Ostia. There was no attempt, it seems, to make this execution a public spectacle for the gratification of popular disgust. The road, which is now one of the most desolate outlets into the country round Rome,

times : it is so found in Chrysostom and Basil in the fourth century. Suicer gives no earlier example. So ἡγόνμενος is commonly used indefinitely for "persons in authority," ἡγέμων more technically for "a governor," "a prefect," "a proconsul," &c.

was then hedged in on both sides by the tombs and monuments of the dead, and was neither an avenue of suburban dwellings nor a thoroughfare of popular resort. The mode of the Apostle's execution, we are further told, was by the sword ; his death was that of a Roman citizen, from which, even in those degenerate days, the Roman mob might be expected to turn away with shame, rather than to throng to it with insolent delight. It seems, indeed, to have been not unusual to conduct a Roman criminal some way beyond the walls, in order to avoid making a public spectacle of so ill-omened an execution. But, with St. Peter, the circumstances are said to have been different. If he really suffered, as we are assured, we know not under what charge he was convicted ; but as he was not a Roman citizen, it might be expected that his punishment would be more suitable to the case of an unprivileged stranger. It is said that he was taken to the slope of the Vatican hill, hard by the spot where the victims of the original persecution had suffered, and was there crucified. The prurient imagination of the martyrologists has added, that he was crucified with his head downwards, at his own request, as though he held himself unworthy to die in the nobler attitude of his divine Master. The places of these two illustrious martyrdoms might naturally be remembered by the surviving disciples, and honoured, as soon as it was safe or possible to do so, by the erection of chapels or churches over them. As time went on and the faith of Christ became exalted into the religion of the empire, these modest memorials were converted into illustrious fanes ; the tomb of St.

Paul is now inclosed within a spacious basilica, glowing, since its restoration after a recent fire, with gold and marble, and inferior only to the most sumptuous of all Christian temples, the cathedral of St. Peter. But the fate of the two buildings is very different. The one, planted in a low and pestilential spot, is paced only by a few fever-stricken monks, and an occasional hasty traveller or pilgrim. The other is crowded day by day by residents and strangers, as the shrine equally of religious feeling and of æsthetic taste, and has become the centre of devotion of the most numerous denomination of Christian believers.

The result of this sketch of St. Paul's connection with Rome will be felt no doubt to be, on the whole, disappointing. Beyond the meagre notice in the book of the Acts of the Apostles, we seem to have few or no certain historical data to rely upon in delineating it. The incidental allusions of the Apostle's own letters are obscure, and of questionable interpretation. The single passage from the work of a contemporary believer which can be adduced for a particular incident in Paul's career, admits of different constructions. The references of later Christian writers are evidently founded on vague and uncertain traditions, framed, as seems but too probable, to meet a previously-constructed theory. It would, indeed, be easy to swell these scanty memorials by legends which were once current among the early ecclesiastical writers, with regard to Paul as well as Peter, but which at the present day an historian, with any self-respect, can only pass over in silence.

But, if our materials for constructing an account of

St. Paul's doings at Rome are so slight and precarious, still more disappointing will it be to note, how slight to all outward appearance was the effect produced by the great Apostle's preaching. Of the number of the Christian disciples who suffered in the Neronian persecution we can say nothing ; but, granting that they were, as Tacitus declares, a great multitude, and that many of these were converts of the Apostle himself, we cannot, it would seem, claim any among them as persons of note, either for rank or intelligence. Neither at the time, nor for many later generations, did the Pagan writers speak of the sect of Christians as comprehending men of social or moral distinction. The notion of Seneca having been converted has been shown to be utterly groundless ; nor dare we put in a claim for Pomponia Græcina ; nor for the daughter of Cogidubnus or Caractacus, and her husband Pudens. In the next generation, Flavius Clemens, a cousin of the emperor Domitian, was put to death, on the pretence that he was an atheist, and a convert to Judaism, and shrank from the proper duties of his rank and station.¹ Ecclesiastical writers claim him as a Christian martyr ; but the inference is, at least, insecure. Still more, it must be allowed that the Roman Church produced no men of mark in our literary annals for some centuries. It is impossible to suppose that where the inspired eloquence of Paul was but partially successful, the tame mediocrity of Clemens Romanus can have commanded the submission of intelligent pagans. Another disappoint-

¹ Dion Cassius, lxxvii. 14.

ment still awaits us, for when the Church of Rome seems first to emerge from its obscurity at the end of the second century, we find her, under her bishop Callistus, tinged with vice or sunk in indolence, and lapsing into the secular habits and associations of the Pagans around it. Her numbers as well as her virtues increased under the stress of persecution; but the first cessation of her sufferings in the third century betrayed in her a weaker character than can be charged against other churches. The Christian fugitives from the sack of Rome by Alaric scandalized, by their frivolity and licentiousness, the holier society of brethren among whom they sought an asylum in Africa.

All these things are disappointing. It is difficult, no doubt, to understand the apparent failure of the direct teaching of the great Apostle Paul. It was not so with the preaching of Luther; it was not so with the preaching of Wesley. It may be remarked, indeed, that the special teaching of St. Paul has never enjoyed the same acceptance with the more effeminate and susceptible minds of southern Europe as with the sturdier understandings of our northern nations. The people of Rome in the early age of the Church were much the same in this respect as they have been ever since. The doctrine of the Epistles to Galatians and Romans has never been made to harmonize with the worship of the Virgin, the invocation of saints, the adoration of relics, or generally with a blind addiction to a sensuous ceremonial. The religion of the Gospel as expounded by St. Paul appeals directly to the conscience, and brings man face to face with his Maker,

and with Jesus Christ and Him only as his Mediator and Redeemer. But whatever our disappointment, as above intimated, there seems to be a lesson of no little significance to be learnt from it. We are ourselves making, at this moment, great efforts for the conversion of the heathen abroad, for the planting of the Christian Church more especially in the midst of old-established superstitions in foreign lands. We complain of the slow progress we make, of our repeated failures, and our meagre successes. Our preachers, brave and devoted as they are, can take, it would seem, no such hold on the imaginations of the Mussulmans, the Hindoos, or the Chinese, as Luther upon the monks and peasants of Saxony, and Wesley upon tradesmen and artizans in England. But, possibly, our advance is, after all, not slower than that of St. Paul himself. It may well be believed that in religion, as in many other things, the slowest growths are the surest and most enduring. It will be found, perhaps, that our great modern revivals have been so successful because they have been revivals ; because our preachers have been engaged in reviving a life which had become wellnigh extinguished, not in creating a life which had not existed before. Nothing is so hard to extirpate as the root of a popular superstition. The idolatries of the ancient world were in a constant state of flux. The various forms in which they presented themselves were constantly shifting. The devotees of Paganism were hunted again and again out of every stronghold. They were pursued from elemental-worship to hero-worship ; from the concrete divinity to the abstract ; from the classical

mythology to the Gnostic or Mithraic theosophy ; but repulsed in one shape, the innate Paganism of the human heart returned from age to age, and resumed its dominion over the highest as well as the lowest intellects. The Pagans continued to shift their ground with every defeat, but they yielded it only to occupy it again with every fresh revival of their superstitious impulses. The desperate contest they still continued to maintain against Christianity in the fourth and fifth centuries, when every external support had failed them, may give us an idea of the long and dubious fight we shall have to carry on for generations, perhaps, for ages to come, with the last remnants of the popular creeds, which still stand erect, and defy us to the onset. The great triumph of St. Paul's preaching, as far as it has been yet triumphant, was, after all, reserved for the fifth, or even for the sixteenth or the eighteenth century.

NOTE ON ST. PAUL'S ACQUAINTANCE WITH ROMAN LAW.

[It may be right to apprise the reader that the remarks here appended are substantially the same as the writer has previously advanced in his Boyle Lectures for 1864, "On the Conversion of the Roman Empire."]

ST. PAUL, we know, though a Jew and a native of Tarsus in Cilicia, enjoyed the rights of Roman citizenship from his birth. His city had been an important place during the civil contests of the great Roman captains. Cæsar had treated it with favour, and may probably have conferred the franchise upon some of its people. M. Antonius was also partial to it. It was noted as a school of literature and philosophy, hardly second at the time to Athens or Alexandria. Several of its scholars belonged to the sect of Stoicks, which generally made a study of Roman law. Augustus placed himself under the tuition of one of these instructors, and gave his nephew Marcellus as a pupil to another. It was observed that the alumni of Tarsus did not generally make their permanent abode there, but more commonly repaired from thence to other seats of learning or of business. If the young Saul of Tarsus acquired his early training at his native university he would not be unlikely

to betake himself in riper years to Jerusalem, and sit there at the feet of Gamaliel, as a student of the laws and customs of the Hebrew sages. We may easily believe, however, that he carried away with him, even in his youth, an acquaintance with the principles of Roman jurisprudence, which it was of the first importance to a Roman citizen of foreign extraction to make himself familiar with, for his own personal security. The Roman *civitas* conferred on him distinct privileges; it assured him of protection and freedom; it gave him a certain prestige among his less fortunate countrymen. We find St. Paul fully aware of these advantages: he appeals more than once to his rights as a citizen, and asserts his superiority as born to them over one who had only purchased them for himself.

But further, we meet in the teaching of the apostle with a direct application of Roman legal principles in illustration of his doctrine, such as none but a Roman could be expected, or would perhaps be able, to make.

i. The mission of our Lord Jesus Christ for the salvation of men is described in Scripture in two ways; sometimes as though it were done of His own will, and at other times as the accomplishment of a task imposed upon Him by the Father. It will be found that, while St. John and St. Peter represent it distinctly in the former light, St. Paul introduces the notion of the Father's will controlling His Son's action. Upon this view he strongly insists. Thus we have on the one hand, in St. John's Gospel, xviii. 37: "To this end was I born, and for this cause

came I into the world, that I should bear witness of the truth." Again, 1 Epist. iii. 16: "Because He laid down His life for us." St. Peter, 1 Epist. iii. 18: "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust." Comp. 1 Epist. iv. 1. In one place, indeed, St. John seems to glide into the other view, where he says, 1 Epist. iv. 9: "In this was manifested the love of God towards us, because that God sent His only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through Him." But in St. Paul the notion of Christ's work being an act of obedience to his Father becomes more prominent and exclusive. Thus, in Romans iii. 25: "Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation;" v. 19: "As by one man's disobedience many were made sinners, so by the *obedience* of one shall many be made righteous;" Galat. i. 4: "Who gave Himself for our sins . . . according to the will of God the Father;" Phil. ii. 8: "Who humbled Himself and became *obedient* unto death;" Coloss. i. 19: "It pleased the Father that in Him should all fulness dwell; and having made peace through the blood of His cross, by Him to reconcile all things to Himself." Comp. Heb. v. 8: "Though he were a son, yet learned He *obedience* by the things which He suffered." It is not meant that there is any absolute discrepancy in the two views here indicated, but that the one apostle is led to dwell more upon the obedience of Christ, the others on the spontaneousness of His sacrifice.

But this notion of the necessary subjection of the Son to the Father agrees exactly with the principle of Roman law, familiar to every citizen, which was in-

volved in the *patria potestas*, or authority of the father over his children. The law of the Twelve Tables, which gave the father an entire right over the person and property of his son, even after he had come of age, was maintained, in theory, at least, down to a later period of the empire. Gaius, under the Antonines, still speaks of it as peculiar to Roman jurisprudence, except that the nation of the “Galatæ” admitted the same principle among themselves. It may be a question whether he means the Gauls or the Galatians; but supposing him to mean the latter, as seems most probable, it would give a special significance to the language which St. Paul addresses to them in his Epistle (iv. 1) : “Now I say that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all ; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father. Even so we, when we were children, were in bondage under the elements of the world. But when, in the fulness of time, God sent forth His son,” &c. Such an illustration would have little force unless the people to whom it was addressed were familiar with the principle referred to. But to the disciples at Rome the apostle would doubtless be intelligible enough when he speaks of the “bondage of corruption,” in allusion apparently to the subjection of the Roman son to his earthly father.

2. In the Epistle to the Galatians (iii. 15) we read : “ Brethren, I speak after the manner of man ; though it be but a man’s covenant, yet if it be confirmed, no man disalloweth or addeth thereto ” ; where the apostle declares that he is making use of an illustra-

tion from secular customs, and refers apparently to the Roman law of Wills, according to which the testator, after certain formalities fulfilled, could neither revoke nor alter the disposition of his property. Thus, when we are told by Suetonius that Cæsar, and subsequently Augustus, placed their testaments in the hands of the Vestal Virgins (Jul. 83, Octav. 111), we are to understand that they renounced in so doing the power of cancelling or adding a codicil to them. Comp. also Galat. iv. 1, and following, above referred to.

Again, in the Epistle to the Hebrews, there seems to be a similar reference to the Roman law of testation (Heb. viii. 6), where, however, the writer mixes up the idea of a covenant and of a will (Heb. ix. 15-17); either of which may be implied by the word *διαθήκη*, which we here translate "testament," but elsewhere "covenant." He had been describing Jesus Christ as the mediator or intermediate instrument of a new "covenant," as opposed to the old covenant made by God with Abraham, but he goes on to introduce the idea of a will, suggested, as it would seem, by the death of Christ, adding: "For where a testament is, there must also of necessity be the death of the testator. For a testament is of force after men are dead; otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator liveth"; where it may be remarked that our translation "be" hardly gives the force of the Greek *φέρεσθαι*, which is really a forensic term, meaning that the death must be "judicially proven."

This coincidence in the use of forensic language in an acknowledged epistle of St. Paul's, and in

another which must be regarded as at least Pauline in its tone and character, is worth remarking, particularly when we consider how peculiar the forms of testamentary law were to the Romans. This fact has been pointed out by Sir H. Maine in his valuable book on "Ancient Law," where he gives the Romans the credit of "inventing the will," and says that it is doubtful whether "a true power of testation" was known to any original society except them. "The original institutions of the Jews," he adds, "have provided nowhere for the privileges of testatorship." (*Ancient Law*, p. 194, foll.)

3. The use which St. Paul makes of the idea of adoption, a prominent feature in the Roman law, is still more marked. The spiritual connection of the true disciple with God is repeatedly represented to us in his epistles under the figure of sonship. The idea of simple sonship, indeed, is brought prominently forward by St. John; as 1 Epist. iii. 1, "that we should be called," *i.e.* should be, "sons of God." Comp. v. 9, 10; iv. 6, and other places. But whereas St. John always represents this idea in its simplest form, St. Paul, and St. Paul only, describes this sonship more artificially as adoptive. This view is set forth in a marked way in the Epistle to the Romans, viii. 14, following: "As many as are led by the Spirit of God, they are the sons of God. For ye have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but ye have received the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, Abba, Father." 21: "Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the

children of God . . . And not only they, but ourselves also, which have the first-fruits of the spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, to wit, the redemption of our body." This illustration, it is to be observed, is not taken from any Jewish custom ; the law of Moses contains no provision for such a practice, nor is there any indication of its having obtained among the Jewish people. Adoption was essentially a Roman usage, and was closely connected with the Roman ideas of family. The maintenance of the *sacra privata*, the domestic rites of the family, was regarded by the Romans as a matter of great political importance ; and their law accordingly described minutely the forms under which, in default of natural heirs, the paterfamilias might thus prospectively secure it. The son was declared to be the absolute property of his father from his birth to his father's decease. In order to being adopted out of his own family into that of another man it was necessary that he should undergo a fictitious sale. But if a son had been thus sold by his father and had again recovered his liberty, he fell again under the paternal dominion, and it was not till he had been thus sold, *emancipatus*, three times, that he became finally free from this paramount authority. Accordingly, the adopter required that the fiction of sale should be three times repeated, before the son could be received into his new family, and fall under the dominion of his new father. When, however, these formalities had been complied with, the adopted son became incorporated into the family of his adopter, identified, as it were, with his

person, made one with him ; so that on the adopter's decease he became not so much his representative as his second self, the perpetuator of his legal personality. He assumed, moreover, on adoption, the burdens or privileges incident to the performance of the rites of his new family. He relinquished his former *sacra*, and attached himself to those of his new parent.

All this appears to have been in the Apostle's mind when he addressed the Roman disciples in the passage just cited. The Spirit of God, he says, bears witness with our spirit, or confers upon us an inward persuasion, that we are now by adoption the children of God Himself, whereas we were before the children of some other father—namely, the world or the Evil One. But henceforth we are relieved from the bondage of corruption, from the state of legal subjection to this evil parent, and admitted to the glorious liberty of the happy children of a good and gracious father, even God. And how was this escape from bondage to be effected? God paid a price for it. As the Roman adopter paid, or made as though he paid down a certain weight of copper, so God gave His Son as a precious sacrifice, as a ransom to the world, or the Evil One, from whom He redeemed His adopted children. Henceforth we become the elect, the chosen of God. The same illustration is indicated in Galatians iv. 3 : "When we were children we were in bondage under the elements of the world," addicted to the *sacra* of our original family; "but when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son . . . to redeem them that

were under the law, that they might receive the adoption of sons . . . Howbeit, when ye knew not God," and were not yet enrolled in this new family by adoption, "ye did service unto them which by nature are no Gods. But now, after ye have known God . . . how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements," such as the *sacra* of your original family, "whereunto ye desire to be again in bondage." Compare Ephesians i. 5 : "Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ unto Himself," where the custom is referred to as familiar to those whom he addresses ; and such it would doubtless be, inasmuch as Ephesus was the residence of a Roman proconsul, and a centre of Roman legal procedure.

THE END.

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